

# SOLIDARITY

Vol. 23, No. 10

For All Members of DMI Area Local APWU, IPWU, and BMC

October, 2019

## Interest Arbitration Next Session - APWU Rank And File Witness Panels

During the next session of interest arbitration (Sept. 24-26), postal workers from the workroom floor will serve as key witnesses in front of the arbitration panel.

"We always knew that interest arbitration was a possibility and have been preparing for it since negotiations began," said President Dimondstein. "Now that it is upon us, in order to get the best contract possible, we are utilizing an outstanding team of economists, attorneys, and – most importantly – APWU members."

The arbitration preparation process included hundreds of rank and file surveys and interviews, training local members to interview their fellow workers in their respective areas about the work they do and to identify potential witnesses. Those potential witnesses, who are APWU members right off the workroom floor, were then brought to APWU headquarters for meetings in preparation of testifying.

No matter the craft, it was clear: APWU members are working under stressful conditions. PTFs are getting shuttled between offices and their flexible schedules are being abused. PSEs are having to self-train or be trained by a fellow co-worker – if they are lucky to have one. All postal workers are working habitually understaffed.

In spite of this, every single day, APWU members come in and complete the postal mission, serving the public and ensuring that the USPS remains one of the most trusted government entities. These key expert testimonies will undoubtedly hold a lot of weight in the hearings.

The witnesses in the panels who will

testify on September 24-26 will "put a human face on the cold numbers the Arbitrator looks at," said President Dimondstein. "Their experiences carry a lot of weight in the hearings."

"I want to thank our most important experts – the APWU members," said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. "Every member that responded to a survey,

participated in an interview about their job, participated in these meetings, and will testify is helping us be better prepared for interest arbitration."

### **ACTOR DANNY GLOVER:**

## **My Parents Proudly Worked For The US Postal Service. Don't Destroy It.**

*This opinion-editorial (op-ed) reprinted below was originally published in USA Today on July 11.*

When I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, my family planned our vacations around big picnics for post office employees. I remember the thrill of taking the train from San Francisco to one of these gatherings in Santa Cruz.

For my parents, both longtime postal employees and union officers, that was their community. Back then, it was mine, too.

Today, the U.S. Postal Service is under pressure to slash costs in ways that would be devastating for customers and employees of all races — but especially African Americans. For black families like mine, the Postal Service has long been one of the few reliable paths to the middle class.

My parents were so proud in 1957 when they had saved enough money to buy a house. They sometimes held union meetings in our living room and had me put my seventh-grade typing skills to good use addressing envelopes for the union newsletter.

The black postal workers I met back then felt good about who they were and



optimistic about where the country was going. The civil rights movement was gaining strength, and the post office was one arena in which they could organize for equality.

### **Black Families Will Be Hardest Hit**

Today, the Postal Service remains a critical source of good jobs for African Americans. Black employees make up 28.6% of the postal workforce — more than double their share of the U.S. population.

In 2018, average Postal Service wages were \$51,540 a year, just slightly below the average for all U.S. workers. According to the Institute for Policy Studies, wages were substantially lower in the nine other occupations in which blacks make up at least 25% of employees. For example, home health aides, 26.1% of whom are black, averaged just \$25,330 per year. Barbershop employees, 30.8% of whom are black, earned \$33,220.

These numbers make clear why black families stand to be the hardest hit by the Trump administration's proposals to sell off the Postal Service to for-profit corporations. A presidential task force plan to move in that direction calls for privatizing parts of the service,

reducing delivery days, closing post offices, and jacking up prices on most package and mail deliveries.

It would also get rid of the collective bargaining rights that have helped postal workers maintain decent wages. My parents' generation fought for and won those rights in 1970.

Danny Glover arrives at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles in February 2019.

Privatizers say such moves are necessary because the Postal Service is in a financial crisis. But Congress manufactured this crisis through a 2006 law that required pre-funding of employee retirement health benefits up to the year 2056 — a stunning 50 years in advance of when the law was passed. No other federal agency or private corporation faces this burden, and without it the Postal Service would've been profitable the past six years, according to a December report by the Treasury Department.

### **Real Reforms Expand Service**

Instead of more cuts, policymakers should do away with the onerous pre-funding mandate and explore new profit sources, such as postal banking. One government report found that expanding services such as check cashing, bill payment and electronic money orders could generate as much as \$1.1 billion in annual revenue after five years — all while dramatically expanding financial services for low-income Americans.

Sneakers aren't the real problem: My black, disadvantaged students live with racism. They don't need to see it on sneakers.

Here again, there's a lot at stake for black families. As Sen. Bernie Sanders

*continued on page 3*

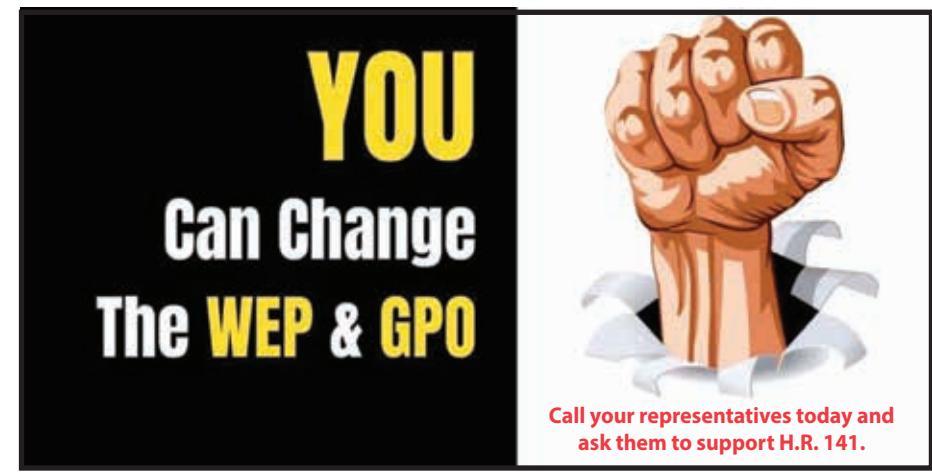
# Government Pension Offset And The Windfall Elimination Provision

This law affects workers who are entitled to a pension based on work in Federal, State, or local government that was not covered by Social Security, such as CSRS.

What is the difference between the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset? The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) may apply if you receive both a non-covered pension and Social Security retirement benefits. The WEP can reduce your benefit payment by as much as half the amount of your pension. The Govern-

ment Pension Offset (GPO) law says that an amount equal to two-thirds of a non-Social Security covered pension must be deducted from any Social Security dependent benefits a person may be due.

The bi-partisan Social Security Fairness Act of 2019 (H.R. 141), would amend part of the Social Security Act by repealing the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. This law needs to be repealed and replaced with a fair formula that treats public servants like all other American workers.

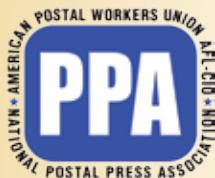


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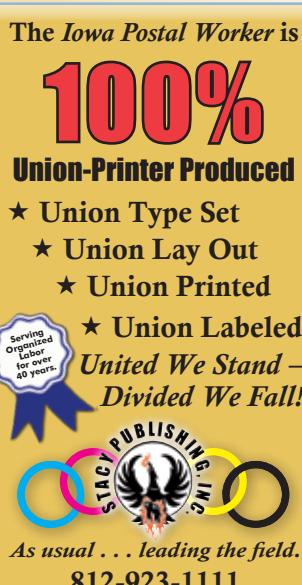


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# Contact Your Representatives Today!

by Kimberly Karol, IPWU President

For months the Postal Service has been the target of Presidential policy initiatives. Sadly, most of recommendations have been aimed at reducing services, closing offices or limiting hours especially in small towns across the country. There is also an attempt to change the terms for retirement for all future. These proposals have met with stiff opposition thanks to many of you who took the time to call your Representatives, educated them on the issues and consequences of such negative actions. This is not the end of the story, the proposals are still out there, but for the moment the attack has taken a new form.

Recently the administration announced that they are thinking of

withdrawing from the Universal Postal Union, UPU. This Organization includes 192 countries that have been working together for decades developing policies and setting pricing that provide international mail services for billions of people around

to continue international services.

The UPU is an agency of the United Nations that provides all 192 countries to have a voice and vote in establishing policy and setting prices. To withdraw from this organization would require the Postal Service

compromise the safety of the mail.

This proposal hurts both the individual customer as well as the U.S. small business customer who is selling products internationally. It is yet another short sighted, irrational and reactionary proposal from an administration that is not motivated by the best interests of the citizens. Rather it is motivated only by the increased profits of corporate allies or their own profits.

It is also a back door means of handicapping the Postal Service and stripping away a profitable product segment.

I urge you once again to contact your Representatives and urge them to contact the President and urge the Administration not to withdraw from the UPU.

*"The UPU is an agency of the United Nations that provides all 192 countries to have a voice and vote in establishing policy and setting prices. To withdraw from this organization would require the Postal Service to negotiate new agreements with all 192 countries individually."*

the world. The USPS earned over \$600 million dollars in International Shipping fees last year. Whether it is a citizen living abroad sending letters home to loved ones, or Naturalized Citizens sending packages and letters to love ones in their native countries there is an increased need

to negotiate new agreements with all 192 countries individually. This is not only impractical it would be very time consuming and expensive. Without the multilateral negotiation power of the UPU there would be no means to ensure pricing and maintain custom regulations, which could

means of handicapping the Postal Service and stripping away a profitable product segment.

I urge you once again to contact your Representatives and urge them to contact the President and urge the Administration not to withdraw from the UPU.

## GM Stops Paying For Health Insurance For Striking Union Workers; Talks Continue

General Motors Co shifted health insurance costs for its striking workers to the United Auto Workers union as its members walked the picket line for the second day on Tuesday, September 17.

The UAW on Monday launched the first company-wide strike at GM in 12 years, saying negotiations toward a new national agreement covering about 48,000 hourly workers had hit an impasse.

This year's talks between the union and GM, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV (FCA) were expected to be tough, with thorny issues such as health-care costs, profit-sharing and the use of temporary workers on the table.

The UAW said Tuesday that some progress had been made during talks. As of Tuesday evening, talks were still continuing among some committee-level bargaining groups but no deal was imminent, officials said. The strike has now surpassed

the length of the nearly two-day 2007 GM work stoppage.

Workers on picket lines outside GM factories waved signs declaring "UAW On Strike." In Bowling Green, Kentucky, they blocked the three entrances to the assembly plant, which normally builds the Chevrolet Corvette.

Salina Alexander, who works in the Kentucky plant's paint shop, said the strike is about GM sharing some of its profits with union-represented employees who helped bail out the carmaker during its bankruptcy. "We hung in there with them. They can give us something back."

Meanwhile, GM said coverage for the striking workers' health insurance reverted to the union, which unsuccessfully sought to have the No. 1 U.S. automaker cover those costs through the end of the month. That places another drain on the union's strike fund.

"We understand strikes are diffi-

cult and disruptive to families," GM spokesman Jim Cain said in an email. "While on strike, some benefits shift

to being funded by the union's strike fund, and in this case hourly employ-  
*continued on page 14*

## My Parents Proudly Worked For The US Postal Service. Don't Destroy It.

*continued from page 1*

and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez noted in a recent statement in support of postal banking, low-income Americans lack access to regular financial services and have to resort to predatory payday lenders and check-cashing outfits. And African Americans and Latinos make up a disproportionate share of the 64 million underbanked Americans.

Danny Glover's parents, James and Carrie Glover, in 1944.

Throughout our nation's history, the Postal Service has responded to changing needs while continuing to advance the common good. In the 19th century, the Pony Express and Rural Free Deliv-

ery helped bind the nation. During the Civil War, postal money orders allowed Union soldiers to send funds home safely. From 1911 to 1967, people who had lost confidence in banks could deposit their money in a postal savings account.

To this day, I still run into people who remember my dad, Jimmy Glover, as the man who trained them to sort mail by hand and treated them with dignity on the job. To them, he was the real celebrity in our family.

We must protect the Postal Service — and support new innovation to meet 21st century needs. We owe it to my parents and the millions of others who built this vital public infrastructure.

# They Don't Have The Right

by Omar M. Gonzalez,  
Western Region Coordinator

We often hear that 'management has the right to mismanage.' NO THEY DON'T! Laws require that USPS be run efficiently, including managing the workforce.

Postal regulations, statutes and our contract outline what management cannot do. When we fight management, we must use all three resources.

Postal life would be less hectic if only all parties followed the union contract. Regulations related to your working conditions, hours and wages are subject to the contract. Management does not own the Postal Service, they operate it.

They don't have the unilateral right to do our work unless permitted by Article 1 Section 6a and b. In level 18 offices they can do only 15 hours of craft work per week. In larger offices they have to meet one of the five exceptions, otherwise they have to pay the employee who would have performed the work.

They don't have the right to just make anyone a 204b unless a PS 1723

is issued to the union in advance and restricted the use of the 204b before an individual forfeits their bid.

They don't have the right to unilaterally change established past practices in your office even when new bosses take over. Article 5 and the law prohibits unilateral changes to the CBA or past practice, unless negotiated with the union after notice is given.

They don't have the right to make cross craft assignments unless they meet certain conditions reasonably unforeseeable or unavoidable per Article 7. Intentional understaffing is not one of those.

They don't have the right to impose overtime without penalties which include additional premiums for exceeding the 12-hour daily/60 hours weekly limits. Nor can they schedule overtime (OT) willy-nilly without penalty. CBA Article 8 has 2.5 pages of rules and the JCIM has 13 pages on OT rules.

They don't have the right to change your work hours unless they comply with federal law, their own out-of-schedule premium rules and Article

8 contract restrictions. Nor can they change your rest days without complying with the work week and craft articles.

They don't have the right to demand medical documentation for sick leave absence of 3 or less days unless they can show a legitimate business reason do it. It is not just on their demand; they must also consider your welfare – equitably on a case by case basis – per Articles 10, 16, 19.

They don't have the right to reassign you at will. They must comply with seniority rules, bid rights, section identifications, skill requirements, higher level pay rules and other contract restrictions.

They don't have the right to treat PSEs as servants or casuals, these employees have specific contract rights. Being a "Postal Support Employee" is not a green light for mistreatment. PSEs have their own CBA sections covering their employment and their conversion to career status.

They don't have the right to unilaterally deny light duty to injured work-

ers, they are obligated to make every effort to find work that employee can perform. Being denied work is not automatic. There are strong protections in Article 13.

They don't have the right to work you in a dirty, unsafe place nor abuse you in any way. Many regulations, laws and Article 14 offer strong protections. Federal law imposes penalties for unsafe conditions.

They don't have the right to impose discipline at will and must prove "just cause" exists by following six distinct rules. In discipline cases, management has the burden of proof and must comply with due process procedures.

The contract has 392 pages agreed upon work rules that have no value unless they are enforced by us all. You have a right to grieve violations.

Access the CBA/JCIM here and then fight to enforce it.

We are fighting for a new contract now! Please stand with me and Coordinators Stone, Gallagher, Beasley, Sulak, and the entire APWU like never before. You cannot spell UNION without U and I.

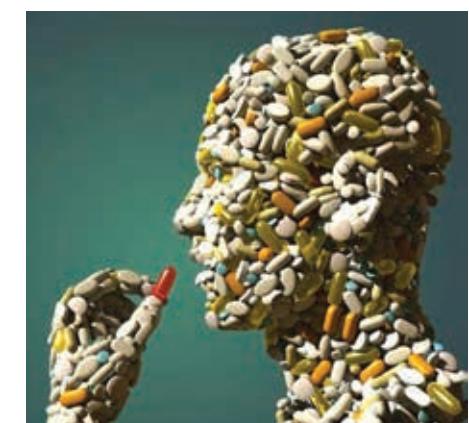
## Why The High Cost Of Prescription Drugs?

Americans are not able to negotiate over the price of prescription drugs for several reasons. First, laws passed by Congress forbid the government from negotiating prescription drug prices for its citizens and make it illegal to import

prescription drugs from other countries that do negotiate drug prices. Secondly, unlike most other goods and services, you cannot walk away and not buy the lifesaving drugs you need. That gives you zero negotiation power at the phar-

macy.

This has created a system that has made drug prices highest for those who can afford it the least and unfair to use for all. The uninsured pay retail prices for drugs. The underinsured, out of fi-



nancial necessity, tend to choose high deductible health insurance plans or those are all that their employer offer. High deductible plans force patients to pay the full cost of drugs until their considerable deductible is met. Those lucky enough to have quality health insurance still are paying for the huge mark-up on prescription drugs – if not in copays and deductibles, then in the large premium increases in their paychecks.

Several states have either passed or are passing legislation so they can purchase drugs from other countries for state employees in an attempt to stem the tide of rising prescription drug costs. I look forward to seeing if the courts side with the states and allow them to go outside the country to seek relief from the rising costs of prescription drugs.

### Medicare Advantage Plans

Medicare Advantage plans have been in the news recently and not for



## MILESTONES IN LABOR HISTORY — October —

**6**

**1918** - Women trade unionists hold first national conference.

**1993** - President Clinton signs the Federal Employees Political Activities Act (Hatch Act Reform) which, for the first time in over 50 years, grants postal and federal workers the right to participate in partisan politics.

**7**

**1879** - Birthdate of Joe Hill, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organizer, songwriter, and poet.

**18**

**1648** - Shoemakers of Boston, first labor organization in America founded.

**21-22**

**2001** – October 21 death of postal worker Thomas L. Morris, Jr. and on October 22, death of Joseph P. Curseen, Jr. Both of these APWU brothers worked at

**23**

**1938** - National Association of Post Office Custodial Employees organized.

**24**

**1940** - The 40-hour work week went into effect under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

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**DMI News & Views**

Official Publication of the Des Moines, Iowa Area Local #44, APWU

Vol. 54, No. 5      EDUCATE TO ORGANIZE      October, 2019



UPDATES  
BY  
BATES

by MJ Bates, President

**The Plant:** The Des Moines Iowa P&DC is going through some changes. Recently, management has taken out an AFSM machine and is in the process of putting the Automated Induction system (AI) on the other two machines that are left. Management has notified the APWU that the mail handler craft will be the primary craft on the machines with one clerk per machine per tour to run the machines. Maintenance is working on fitting the AI on the first machine and as soon as that work is complete, we assume that we will be meeting with the RI399 committee. The RI399 process is the process that identifies what craft performs what work. The clerk craft will see a reduction in staffing in the flat sorter area. We will do everything we can to protect our work.

# Updates By Bates

## Management Has Taken Out The AFSM Machine

Management has instructed clerks in the automation section to only print one label at a time and has notified the APWU there is a new software program coming in. The union has voiced your concerns and we have also filed a grievance which is being appealed to arbitration. Management's job is to make our jobs easier and more efficient instead of harder and more work. We will continue to monitor this issue. The union needs statements from the clerks on the one label issue. Please see your steward and write a statement.

Management in the truck terminal is disciplining expeditors for late trips for the mail not being placed in the trailers on time. Many variables can cause the mail to be delayed or for a truck to be late. Now, the MVS drivers have been instructed to scan out on time regardless if there is mail on the truck or not and to drive out to the station. When they get back to the Plant, they are to start a new trip just to avoid a late trip. What the hell is going on here? !!! We need to contact the OIG and let them know that mail is being delayed. We have been winning all the discipline cases because they are setting the clerks up to fail and the discipline is punitive rather than corrective. Again, management is making our jobs harder than it

has to be while wasting time and money.

MVS drivers are not allowed to work seven days in a row and management is breaking up routes to circumvent paying penalty overtime. We have appealed several grievances to arbitration on this issue and are requesting compensatory increases for the blatant violations of our contract. DMI AREA LOCAL MVS craft director, George Bennett is keeping busy filing these blatant violations.

Maintenance is having their own problems. Management is telling custodians to put a "C" on their paperwork even if they have not completed the route. DO NOT FALSIFY ANY PAPERWORK!!! In accordance with the CTC program, if you complete the route put a C, if you partial the route put a P. We must start working within the CTC program and watch it fail.

**STATIONS:** The Des Moines Iowa stations are blatantly violating the contract and doing so on a daily basis. Management is doing clerk work! CCAs, city carriers and rural carriers are doing clerk work! We need the clerks at the stations to report ALL VIOLATIONS. I can not stress enough that our JOBS are being CUT, and we need to protect our work! Please request a Union steward when you see these violations

going on in your station. If you are on overtime at a station and you see these violations, please request a union steward and we will file a grievance.

Full time regulars should be checking out and checking in accountable items to the carriers. We are not finding the checking out carriers to be a problem. The problem is when the carrier gets back to the office, no clerk is staffed to check the carrier in. This is a violation of handbooks and manuals. If your office is not checking in carriers or the supervisor is checking in carriers, please request a union steward. Make sure that if you check in carriers, you sign your initials so the union knows that it was you.

Also, package look ups and filing is clerk work. You must report all violations!!! Management is reverting a lot of clerk craft positions out at the stations. Management is having a very difficult time posting bids, because it has to go through the compliment committee at the area level. I am sure you have all heard the term we don't earn that many clerks. Management is basing staffing on earned compliment and the union is basing clerk staffing on actual clerk hours. I know we are all busy, but we must keep reporting the violations by requesting a union steward!!!

*continued on page 12*

**Save the Date**

**2020 Tri-State**

**April 24th & 25th**

**Des Moines, IA**

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Dates: Hospitality/Registration, April 23rd, 2020

Check Out: April 26th

More Information to Come

Mike Bates, President, DMI-APWU Local 44 – (515) 265-7371

**Save the Date!**

**Children's Christmas Party**

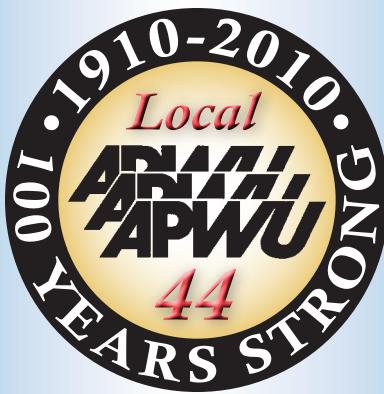
**Saturday, December 7th**

*Following the Union Meeting*  
**Local 44 Union Hall**



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# Membership Appreciation Day

by Cindy Housh  
Event/COPA Coordinator

The DMI Local changed the name of their annual picnic to Membership Appreciation Day. This yearly event is to thank all the union members and retirees for being a part of the American Postal Workers Union. This year's event was held on Saturday, September 7th at the Labor Union Park.

A huge thank you to all the members, retirees, officers, and stewards who volunteered their time to make this event successful. The weather was perfect, except when Mother Nature decided to rain on our parade, once it was time to clean up. We served pulled pork, hot dogs, hamburgers, pulled chicken, baked beans, cole slaw, watermelon, potato salad, chips, and cookies for dessert.

The ice cream truck, paid for by the First Class Credit Union, arrived after lunch to top off our menu. A big thank you goes out the DMI Retiree Chapter and the DMI Auxiliary for

The COPA table was loaded with prizes awarded all day long. The list of winners is posted on all the union bulletin boards at the post offices, here in the paper, and on Facebook and Twitter. Please make arrangements to pick up your prizes by calling the union hall at 515-265-7371.

The DMI Auxiliary also had a raffle with many toys handed out to the children throughout the day. A fun time was had by all the members and families who came to the park that day. If you were not able to make it



this year, try to put this event on next year's calendar. You, the member, deserve a day to be pampered by your union. Thank you for being a member and I hope to see you next year.

In Solidarity.



their monetary donations to help pay for some of the food. The children had plenty of activities to participate in: riding the train, sliding down the huge slide, getting a tattoo, playing video games in the air conditioned truck, making crafts, gunny sack races and having a goodie bag to take home. We hired a balloon artist who made all kinds of animals out of balloons or even a balloon crown to wear.



*more photos continued on page 11*

# Point In Time

by Mark Sarcone,  
Editor/Legislative Director  
15 2020 Presidential Candidates  
highlight Iowa Federation of  
Labor Convention

On the morning of July 3rd, I woke up, checked my phone like I usually do. I checked my Twitter feed first. The first thing I saw was from Charlie Wishman with the Iowa AFL-CIO: "Hey, here's all who will be speaking at the @iowaafcio convention this year! See ya in August, potential leaders of the free world." My response was an eye-opening: "Holy (blank)!" He posted the names of 16, 2020 Democratic Presidential candidates slated to speak at the convention, August 21-23rd at Prairie Meadows Events Center.

That number would grow and shrink between the date of his tweet and the date of the convention. Nonetheless, it was almost overwhelming thinking about *that* many candidates slated to speak to a room of Iowa labor leaders. As far as I know, that was a record for the number of Presidential candidates to speak at an Iowa AFL-CIO convention. In the end, 14 candidates took the stage and one, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, addressed the delegates by video. de Blasio has since ended his campaign. All candidates, including a professional comedian, came to make their case that they were the best candidate for labor and to replace Donald Trump in the White House next year. Full disclosure: Charlie Wishman with the Iowa AFL-CIO said his office did reach out to the White House and extended an invitation to President Trump to speak. The Trump administration declined the invitation.

Before the 10-minute speeches began, Richard Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO, addressed over 150 delegates in the hall via video. His message was clear: every candidate will need more than platitudes and unrealistic promises to earn labor's vote.

With that, the proceedings began and the following are the major points each candidate touched on:



**1. Representative John Delaney:** "My dad told me when I was growing up that if you care about workers, you vote for the Democrats." He added that when we put workers first, every community in America does well.



**2. Senator Elizabeth Warren:** "Unions built America's middle class and unions will rebuild America's middle class." She assured us that unions will have a seat at the table when she is in the White House. Being the "plans candidate," she said we must attack government corruption head-on, regardless of what party is in power. "We must restructure the heart of our economy. We must give workers more power." She also presented her Wealth Tax where any income over \$50 million would be taxed at two-cents on every dollar. That money would be invested in universal childcare, raising the wage of childcare workers and Pre-K workers, technical training, and to attack the opioid crisis. She said that voting should be "as safe as Fort Knox." Finally, she added that the Citizens United case (corporations are people/money is free speech) must be overturned and that she will fight for an America that works for all of us.



**3. Senator Cory Booker:** He stressed that unions are under assault like never before. "This election will be a referendum on us and what we are willing to fight for. We need bigger aspirations than just beating Donald Trump. We will win by getting people off of the sidelines and stand up for and fight for justice." Finally, he added that the American Dream would not be possible without unions.



**4. Mayor Pete Buttigieg:** "The reason we are here and the reason Donald Trump came within cheating distance of the Oval Office is due to policies that have been put in place over the past 40 years. These policies have eviscerated the working and middle class. If we don't stand with organized labor, the American Dream will be gone." He added that freedom is more than more freedom from regulations. "It's the freedom for workers to organize." Further, he would ensure that workers in the gig economy (like Lyft, Uber) would be able to organize.



**7. Secretary Julian Castro:** He said he will emphasize improving education at all levels; improving the healthcare system; increasing prosperity for more people by raising the minimum wage; investing in labor unions to give them better tools to organize, and create more affordable housing.



**8. Governor Steve Bullock:** He spoke about how as even the Governor of a red state like Montana, they've been able to limit campaign donations in his state: "We kicked the Koch Brothers out of Montana during our elections and if we can do that in Montana, it can be done in Iowa and all across America!" He added that "I'm tired of playing defense in trying to stave off the constant wave of attacks on workers. I'm ready to play offense!"



**9. Representative Tim Ryan:** "I'm a union man from a union community in a union part of the country. As President, I will have unions best interests in mind in every decision I make!!" He told the story of how his grandfather taught him at a young age that you don't cross a picket line. He spoke of doubling union membership in the United States to "tilt the balance of power back to labor." He

*continued on page 10*

"there will be no trade agreement made by me without labor at the table."

# Local 44 Celebrates Labor Day



# Labor At Labor Day Parade



# Point In Time

*continued from page 7*

assured delegates that "I will be your President. You can take that to the bank!!"



**10. Senator Amy Klobuchar:** "I stand before you today because of unions. I come from a family legacy of union members." She said that when unions are strong, our whole economy is strong. She, too, said the working class will have a seat at the table in her administration. She assailed Trump's failure to deliver on promises made to the working class. We have a saying in Minnesota: "All foam and no beer."



**11. Senator Michael Bennet:** He attacked Trump on his broken promises for better healthcare and infrastructure. "It's shameful that Democrats lost the jobs argument to someone who filed for bankruptcy six times," he said. He is also in favor of a \$15 per hour federal minimum wage but also increasing tax credits to put more money in low-income households. He stressed the need for apprenticeships. Finally, he said: "it's time to put an end to the reality TV show."

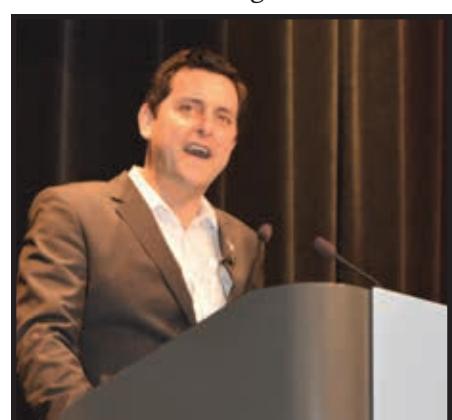


**12. Former Representative Beto O'Rourke:** He touched on immigration and the issues at the border and said as President, "I will assure that our differences are not disqualifying

and not seen as dangerous." On labor unions: "I have found that when it comes to labor when we support unions it's great for unions and the entire country."



**13. Admiral Joe Sestak:** He said he would draw on his military experience to build a stronger middle class.



**14. Ben Gleib:** Gleib is a professional comedian. He said he was proud that he is the *only* candidate running for President that is a union member. He is a member of SAG-AFTRA. He had lots of one-liners mixed in with some seriousness. He joked that the politicians were *his* warm-up act. "Working people in this country are not given the same respect as the ruling class! Isn't it time that changed?!"

He said that the President should be a true servant of the people and

he would implement ideas to give regular citizens the opportunity to weigh-in on any Executive Orders he proposes. On Trump: "To beat a heckler, we need a comedian. Comedy got us into this mess. Comedy can get us out." On Congress: "A 'do nothing' Congress should not try to multi-task."

The remainder of the Convention consisted of regular business and speeches from some of Iowa's Congressional delegation along with other state and local political dignitaries.

Cindy Axne, Third District Congresswoman, could not thank labor enough for all the support she had in getting elected last year and stressed that the same effort will be needed to get re-elected next year. "It's a good thing I'm there because there's a heck of a lot of people in D.C. that I'm working with that are morally bankrupt and they don't understand how important it is to support the middle class and hard-working people in this country. They're consistently trying to find ways to undermine the system so that it benefits corporations and the wealthy at the expense of people in this country who are just trying to make ends meet." However, she said it's not all gloom and doom: "A lot of good people, including Abby (Finkenauer) and Dave (Loeksack), are fighting the good fight every day for working people."

Abby Finkenauer, First District Congresswoman, reflected on the moment that triggered her to run for congress. "I remember the vote to gut Chapter 20 in Iowa in 2017. I remember looking up in the gallery, with tears in my eyes, and looking at many of you who fought to stop this repeal. I thought to myself: this is not how we treat people in our state

and country!" She said the hope for people is "that they can work hard but have a good life; that their kids can get a good education and have a better life; that when you get sick, you don't go bankrupt, and that when you get hurt on the job, that you get compensated for it! That's what drives me every day."

Dave Loeksack, Second District Congressman, who will retire at the end of his term in January 2021 said he will continue to do what I've always done. "I will continue the fight to increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour and I will work hard to protect the Davis-Bacon Act." He said the current United States Mexico Canada (NAFTA 2.0) Agreement needs work in the area of worker protections, the environment and curbing pharmaceutical companies before it's agreeable to him.

Other topics at the Convention included presentations by: Union Veterans Council; Working America; Immigration and Labor; Iowa's Labor Commissioner; A re-enactment of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire; the upcoming Iowa Caucuses; Midwest Labor; Union Organizing in Iowa; United Way of Central Iowa; a current Legal Report; the Iowa Policy Project; and an update from Iowa House of Representatives and Senate from both Minority Leaders about what happened in the most recent General Assembly.

Finally, Jennifer Sherer, Director of the University of Labor Center, gave an update on their current programs. It was just over a year ago that the University of Iowa proposed to shut down the 68-year-old-Center. "Their attempt to kill us only made us stronger. Persistence pays off and when we fight, we win."



APWU Delegates.

# Retiree Fall Luncheon

by Cindy Housh  
Retiree Chapter President

The Retiree Fall Luncheon was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2019. We had a packed house, serving 75 retirees, guests, and auxiliary members. The DMI Auxiliary did a wonderful job of preparing the lunch of three different kinds of soup: potato, chili, and chicken with vegetables and wild rice. To complete the menu we had sandwiches, salads, deviled eggs, fruit, and many kinds of dessert. Thanks to all the auxiliary members who prepared and served the lunch.

We had a guest speaker Jennifer Konfrst, Iowa House of Representatives, House District 43, who did a wonderful job of explaining the procedures and rules a freshman representative endures in her first year serving as a Representative. We recognized several retiree members who were given "50" year pins for being APWU members



These retired members received a "50" year pin for being an APWU member for 50 years. Pictured left to right are Harold Noland, David Olney, Paul Bebensee, Karen Smith, Marion Davis, Gloria Andrews, Marsha Herman, and Bruce Herman. Not pictured is Jim Peterson and Wayne Howard.

for 50 years. The retirees made motions to give \$150.00 to DMI for the Children's Christmas party, \$100.00 to DMI Auxiliary for the Angel Tree project, to have a Christmas party on December 17th with \$300.00 in door prizes, and to buy two Iowa State Fair tickets for our

members who request them in 2020. I will be sending out flyers to all the retiree members in November to sign up for the Christmas party and some information on the Angel Tree project. Thank you for being a retiree member. If you are not a member, please contact me to become one. I look forward to seeing our members in December.

In solidarity.



Jim Peterson

## Membership Appreciation Day

continued from page 6



### 2019 MAD (Membership Appreciation Day) WINNERS OF THE COPA PRIZES

**GRAND PRIZE \$250.00 - Lisa Solinger**

**1 Night Stay at Prairie Meadows Hotel with \$50.00 gift card to AJ's – Cindy Randolph**

TLC \* Roku Smart TV – Cindy Weems  
Watercolor Painting by Local Artist Mark Morrison – Julie Bates  
Framed "Bouquet of Flowers" Picture- Lisa Solinger  
Framed Picture of Marilyn Monroe – Arlen Boelts

2 - Hall Rental Certificates      1. Pam Jones      2. Jane McCullough  
2 - "Union Pride" totes      1. Lisa Solinger      2. Mark Morrison  
2 - Chairs w/pillows      1. Bernita Jones      2. Mark Morrison

Bloody Mary Basket (mix/vodka/16 oz. glasses/4 pc. bar set/coasters) - Shirley Mellor

Wine Basket (2- Summerset wines/6 wine glasses/corkscrew) – Linda McMahon

Libby 4ct. wine glasses/"Iowa State Fair" wine w/holder- Amy Shumaker

Baking Pans/pizza, cookie, bread, cake, & bake pan- Regina Marean

2 decks of cards w/dice, yellow cup, & PPA bag- Mike Bates

Deluxe Poker Set w/"COPA" deck of cards- Barb VerSteegh

17 pc. Stainless Steel Carousel Spice Rack- Mark Morrison

Mr. Jelly Bean Machine w/jar of jelly beans- Barb Wilson

Great Escape Bowling Party, \$75.00 Value – Jo Vonk

Heavy Duty 100' X 5/8" garden hose- Jeff Paullin

12-gallon, 5.5 HP Shop Vac- Regina Marean

Anchor- 4 pc. canister set- John Buchanan

Isabel Bloom Basket- Mark Morrison

Longaberger Basket- Denise Marean

"IOWA" Cutting Board- Barb Wilson

Spiced Rum – Mike Gillespie

18" Lasko Fan- Yong Lovan

PPA Bag w/cooling towel – Cindy Randolph

Sling Bag w/cooling towel – Russ Vonk

Coke Basket w/2 glasses – Barb Park

4- Beverage Stakes- Lonnie Matticks

Igloo 62qt. cooler- Marsha Herman

18 pc. Snapware- Julie Bates

Roaster- Gail Bauman

#### **Gift Cards-**

4- \$25.00 Gift Cards – Casey's Winners 1. Viola Seger 2. Mark Morrison 3. Cindy Randolph  
4. Mark Morrison

4- \$25.00 Gift Cards- Hy-Vee Winners 1. Jane McCullough 2. Barb VerSteegh 3. Pam Bostwick  
4. Tyler Wilson

3- \$25.00 Gift Cards- Texas Roadhouse Winners 1. Tyler Wilson 2. Cindy Weems 3. Gail Bauman  
2- \$25.00 Gift Cards- Red Lobster Winners 1. Viola Seger 2. Karen Alexander

\$60.00 ALDI – Marsha Herman

\$50.00 Amazon – Lisa Solinger

\$25.00 Menards – Lonnie Matticks

\$25.00 KOHLS – Russ Vonk

\$25.00 Panda Express – Arlen Boelts

\$25.00 Applebee's – Sara Cart

\$25.00 Starbucks – Cindy Weems

\$50.00 Villaggio - John Hopkins

\$50.00 Menards - Bernita Jones

\$25.00 Home Depot – Cindy Housh

\$25.00 Panera – Cindy Housh

\$25.00 I Work & Play – Kim Held

\$25.00 Olive Garden – Cindy Housh

\$25.00 Fareway – Marsha Herman

**10 – Free Union T-Shirts:** 1. Jessica White 2. Lisa Solinger 3. Barb VerSteegh 4. Jessica White

5. Viola Seger 6. Arlen Boelts 7. Jon Arnold 8. Lonnie Matticks 9. Beth Lewis 10. Pam Bostwick

**Grand Total of Money Raised for COPA - \$1,461.00**

If you did not pick up your prize at the Membership Appreciation Day (picnic), please call the Union Hall 515-265-7371 (Viola) to make arrangements to get your prize.

Thanks to all the APWU members, stewards and officers who donated prizes. Thank you to all the active and retired members who bought tickets to support COPA.

Cindy Housh, Event/COPA Coordinator

# We're Not Staying Quiet Anymore!

Working people hit the streets last week, marching for climate justice and picketing alongside nearly 50,000 striking General Motors workers.

It was far from a one-off demonstration of our power. Those actions followed in the footsteps of activists, strikers, organizers and countless others who, all this year, have refused to

accept a rigged, broken system.

Worker solidarity is at a boiling point. Hundreds of thousands of working people are joining the labor movement, and millions more say they're ready to follow suit if given the chance.

Americans are driving a moment of collective action unlike anything we've

seen in decades. From the workplace to the picket line to our communities, we're making our voices heard and fighting for the justice that we're owed.

It's a fight to peel back corporations' stranglehold on our economy and eradicate the inequities that still define our society. This is a struggle for massive changes in the way we

work and live, putting our lives and future back into our own hands.

That sort of structural change requires new economic and political rules. And to win those new rules, we have to win some elections.

We've made plenty of noise in the streets. Now, it's time to make sure

*continued on page 13*

## — Updates By Bates —

*continued from page 5*

**Area Offices:** If management is doing clerk work in your office, you must report it. Management can NOT perform clerk work in level 20 and above offices. In level 18 offices management can only do 15 hours a week of clerk work. Please monitor the hours that management is doing and if you feel they are doing over 15 hours a week, please report it to your union steward. The APWU is going through the custodial packages at small towns to make sure the clerks are getting the proper hours to do the cleaning in the office. Management has been out measuring the offices and changing them over to CTC, team cleaning. If your station has been changed over to CTC or better known as TL5 please get a hold of me, so I can get you a copy of your MS47, custodial staffing package. The MS 47 tells the employee what they need to do and the frequency they must do the work. It is very important to keep track of everything that you are doing when it comes to cleaning. If you would like a copy of your custodial staffing package please email me at [mjbates2016@gmail.com](mailto:mjbates2016@gmail.com). Again, report ALL violations!!! If you have any questions please let us know. REQUEST YOUR UNION STEWARD!!!

**OVERVIEW:** Management is blatantly violating the contract. They are squeezing the union steward on union time. They are not responding to in-

formation requests, and they are not meeting with the steward at Step One. The APWU has reached out to the acting District Manager, Sam Reed, to rectify these issues. The NALC is having the same problems, so both unions are meeting with the Des Moines Postmaster and MCSO's along with the HR Manager every Friday at 9 a.m.

We will not be disrespected, and we will not tolerate being blown off by management. We are making some progress and are hopeful that the meetings will make a difference. Here are the issues that we are talking about: Blatant violations such as not staffing a clerk to check in carriers or supervisors checking in carriers. We were also having a problem with the supervisor telling the union who to pay in these grievances. Management agrees that the union identifies who to pay. Carriers doing clerk work. The carrier should clock onto 079 so we can track these violations; unfortunately not all carriers clock over. It is very important that we have eyes and ears on the workroom floor to report the violations. TACS work should be performed by clerks. We have been winning these grievances and paying the lead clerks until recently. The labor department is now denying the cases based on the rural time keeping. Management is challenging that rural time keeping is NOT clerk work. We strongly disagree and we feel we have a very strong argument appealing

this issue to arbitration. IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK AND BE UNITED!!!

REQUEST A UNION STEWARD WHEN YOU SEE VIOLATIONS IN YOUR OFFICE!!! YOU SHOULD GET YOUR STEWARD IMMEDIATELY, TWO HOURS AFTER

THE REQUEST BUT NO LATER THAN THE END OF YOUR TOUR ON THE DAY YOU REQUEST A UNION STEWARD. The Steward has 14 days to file the grievance, so don't wait!!!

In Solidarity.



### DMI-APWU AUXILIARY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT  
Christine Sarcone

VICE PRESIDENT  
Cindy Weems



TREASURER  
Vancee Ringleb

RECORDING SECRETARY  
Karen Tallman

## Come join the fun... APWU Christmas Open House

*Retiree Members & Their Spouse or Significant Other Only  
If you are not a member, sign up today by calling 265-7371  
or sign up the day of the Open House.*

**TUESDAY, December 17th, 1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.  
@ Union Hall, 1200 E. Euclid**

#### PRIZES!

Hors d'oeuvres, Cookies & Conversation  
No Meeting, Just Fun!!

*We will be taking donations for the Food Pantry.*

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION BY  
December 13th, 2019 – CALL 265-7371**



## DMI Area Local Meeting Schedule

### Meetings held at 1200 E. Euclid Ave.

October 5th	10:00 AM	November 20th	7:00 PM
October 16th	7:00 PM	December 7th	10:00 AM
November 2nd 10:00 AM			

*Keep up-to-date with what's going on in your union,  
attend your monthly union meetings!*

# OVER THE COLES

## APWU Elections

by Lance Cole, Editor

The APWU elections are in full swing and may be over by the time this paper is out. I just want everyone to remain calm. Regardless of how this election comes out, we have to work together as a union. We have a contract in front of an arbitrator and we can't afford to lose what we have fought for years to obtain.

Things may get better or they may get worse, but our officers need our support or management and politicians will use this division against us. I hope you all voted.

### Speaking Of Elections

As trivial as they may seem, there are a number of City Council, School board and other local elections that will be taking place on November 5.

Don't take your right to vote for granted. Even these local elections are important. Many of these candidates will run for higher office and we need to support those candidates that our unions have endorsed.

### A Heartfelt Thank You

I want to thank the APWU Auxiliary for the surprise award recognition I received at the Postal Press

Association. The APWU Auxiliary awarded me with the Bridge Builder Award and I am very humbled and grateful.

I am also very thankful and appreciate receiving the Midwest Labor Press Association, Eugene Debs Award.

It is always humbling to be recognized by your peers for doing what you love and know needs to be done.

## Spouses Serving In The Shadows

(This article first appeared in the September/October 2019 issue of the American Postal Worker magazine)

U.S. servicemembers who experience traumatic events during military service are commonly diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or complex PTSD. The conditions can be debilitating if left untreated and can reach far beyond the individual sufferer, negatively impacting friends, family and caregivers. For the purpose of this article the term PTSD will be used to cover both conditions.

The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that 11–20 percent of our combat veterans, depending on their service era, are currently diagnosed with PTSD; as many as 30 percent have had PTSD at some point in their lifetime. According to the National Institutes of Health, a shocking 21.6 percent of our military spouses also qualify for a PTSD diagnosis.

Spouses often develop PTSD from being terrified for long periods about their partner's well-being during deployments, which can be compounded by graphic media coverage and combat imagery seen in movies and television; from repeatedly listening to their partner's stories or feelings of inability to escape trauma relived by their partner. Spouses are also susceptible to vicarious or secondary PTSD, caregiver burden and compassion fatigue. A person with chronic PTSD can require constant care. Spouses often assume the role of caregiver and are frequently faced with a number of stressors including financial strain, managing symptoms, dealing with crises, the loss of friends or a lack of intimacy.

They become hypervigilant to triggers and incessantly work to avoid or remove them. They work diligently to control situations to stall addictive behaviors and temper emotions. They deal with the effects of insomnia,

anxiety and depression. They are on constant alert for signs of suicidal behavior, and always assessing situations to determine the best course of action - whether to coax or push them, or leave them alone. They can even become targets of misplaced anger and rage, and can be subjected to verbal, mental or physical abuse. It is exhausting and unnerving, and eventually leads to resentment, a sense of burden, fatigue and the manifestation of vicarious PTSD.

Unfortunately, despite the value of these caregivers, there has been little to no research beyond the study of incident rates. There has been virtually no focus on what methods best address caregiver stress and no recognition or effort made by the Department of Defense or the Department



of Veterans Affairs health care systems to provide caregivers with the treatment, resources and support they need.

However, researchers have found that burden and stress levels experienced by the spouse are connected to the severity of the veteran's PTSD symptoms. As symptoms worsen, caregiver distress increases and risk of violent behavior becomes more prevalent. Studies show intense or frequent stress can have damaging psychological consequences and places caregiving spouses in greater jeopardy of developing PTSD, somatic disease, clinical depression, panic disorder and suicidality.

Spouses who develop PTSD or other consequential conditions from caring for a loved one with PTSD can benefit from seeking treatment

from their private health care provider or a civilian mental health professional. Depending on the situation, individual, family or couples counseling can be helpful. There are also medications and a variety of individual therapies that have proven to reduce PTSD symptoms including cognitive processing therapy, prolonged exposure therapy, eye movement desensitization reprocessing, and stress inoculation training. Support groups can also be a useful outlet and a place to learn how to better cope with their loved one's PTSD from individuals who have endured similar challenges.

Spouses, family and friends are primary sources of support to their respective veteran or military member. It is important as caregivers that they take time, without guilt, to recharge their batteries and seek assistance to ensure their personal health and mental well-being is being cared for. Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

## We're Not Staying Quiet Anymore!

*continued from page 12*  
that noise is heard loud and clear at the ballot box.

The work of electing genuine advocates to office—from the White House to city councils—starts now. Our success in 2020 won't be secured through ad buys or corporate fundraisers. Ultimately, it will be decided by the size and makeup of the electorate.

Who will be registered to vote, and who will turn out to cast a ballot? That's the game. The other side is already playing, and we need to get moving.

In states across the country—including battlegrounds like Ohio, Wisconsin and Georgia—right-wing forces have changed registration rules, restricted access to polling places and even purged hundreds of thousands

of people from the voter rolls.

They want us to be quiet. They want us to stay home. Because if we aren't silenced, they know we will decide this election.

We can't afford to sit this out. So, I have three asks for you this National Voter Registration Day.

First, check your voter registration status. You can do it right now. Go to your secretary of state's website to see whether you're registered to vote. And if you're not, change that today.

Second, register your people. Talk to your family and your neighbors. Your friends. Your co-workers. Talk to young people and newly eligible voters. Talk to people who haven't voted in years. Ask them if they're registered to vote. If they don't know,

help them check. And if they aren't, help them register.

Third, remember those conversations and make sure all of those people in your life turn out to vote.

That's the game plan. If we follow through with it, we can make sure that the votes cast next November represent who we are. We can make sure that our elected officials represent our communities. And we can make sure the policies they enact represent our best interests.

It's up to us to mobilize our communities. Nobody's going to do it for us, and plenty of deep pockets are doing just the opposite.

We have the power to overcome that opposition and be heard. We do it every day. Let's do it some more.

# How Post Offices Can Beat Payday Lenders

The fight to curb payday loans has reached one of America's oldest institutions: the Postal Service. Democratic representatives Bill Pascrell of New Jersey and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts recently introduced an amendment to the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act authorizing post offices to provide small loans, savings accounts, and other financial services. The amendment sets aside \$1 million to cover any overhead. It passed the House of Representatives on June 25.

Pascrell is a longtime supporter of the Postal Service. In an April 2019 article for this magazine, he argued that the USPS is an essential institution that has been bogged down by privatization efforts. Rather than take away money from the agency, Pascrell said that Congress should expand its functions. Post offices, he noted, could bring loan and ATM access to unbanked Americans, many of whom rely on payday lenders that charge exorbitant interest rates.

Bank access is a severe problem in the United States. In 2017, 6.5 percent of U.S. households were "unbanked" (no bank access), and 18.7 percent were "underbanked" (reliant on financial institutions that were not banks). Almost half of the country could not pull together \$2,000 within thirty days in the event of an emergency (or at least they would struggle greatly to).



Many of these people would have to take out payday loans to deal with such a shock.

"They turn to the unregulated predatory payday lenders, to check cashiers," Pascrell told me. These lenders, he said, "keep families in poverty."

Typical payday lenders charge interest rates of 390 percent per year, a figure so high that one out of five recipients default. A recent move by the Trump administration to slash regulation around payday loans risks making this problem even worse.

Pascrell's solution is not wholly new. Several large countries — includ-

ing China, India, Italy, and France — currently offer loans and savings accounts at post offices. American post offices offered loan and deposit services from 1911 to 1966, when millions of low-income individuals relied on them. In 1947, the post office managed \$3.4 billion, the equivalent of \$35 billion today, making it one of the largest financial institutions in the U.S.

But Lyndon Johnson cut the project in the 1960s as a part of a larger effort to trim government agencies. Afterwards, predatory lenders stepped in to fill the gap, offering small loans that commercial banks often avoid.

To turn a profit, this new crop of lenders set sky-high interest rates that have left poorer Americans trapped in debt.

The postal service still offers one banking service: postal money orders. An inspector general report estimates that it provides roughly \$21 billion of these orders — which operate like pre-paid checks — to those who have no other place to store their money. The report also noted that "ZIP Codes with higher population, more poverty, and lower education levels sold more money orders."

Pascrell and Pressley's legislation — which also had the support of Nevada Republican Mark Amodei — would greatly expand this banking system, making post offices install new ATMs, set up deposit accounts, and hand out low-interest loans to customers. Its odds of passing the Senate are slim. But if the bill were implemented, it would offer low-income Americans inexpensive access to the U.S. financial system. A USPS inspector general study found that postal banking could provide loans at a 90 percent discount compared to what payday lenders charge.

Given its vast reach, Pascrell argued that the Postal Service was uniquely prepared to help solve America's payday lender problem. "It'll be a little push from us," he said. "But they're basically ready to do this."

## GM Stops Paying For Health Insurance For Striking Union Workers; Talks Continue

*continued from page 3*

ees are eligible for union-paid CO-BRA so their health care benefits can continue."

GM has said in the past that it annually spends about \$1 billion a year on healthcare coverage for its hourly workers, suggesting the monthly cost

per worker is in the range of \$1,700 to \$2,000. The UAW on its website said its strike fund covers certain benefits such as medical and prescription drugs, but not dental, vision and hearing. ([uaw.org/strike-faq/](http://uaw.org/strike-faq/))

A UAW spokesman had no immediate comment, but Terry Dittes, vice president in charge of the union's GM department, in a letter to union leaders on Tuesday, said the UAW would review its legal options regarding GM's decision.

During the walkout, UAW members also receive \$250 a week from the union's strike fund.

In a statement on Sunday, GM outlined its offer to the union, saying the package included plans for Michigan and Ohio assembly plants currently lacking products, \$7 billion in U.S. investment and a signing bonus of \$8,000 per worker. GM also said the union would retain "nationally leading"

health care benefits. Charlie Highlander, 59, who also works in the Bowling Green plant's paint shop, said the strike was about protecting the rights of younger workers who are paid at a lower wage or are hired as temporary workers.

"I'm out here mostly for them," he said. "It's about the young people for me."

The contract talks with GM have been overshadowed by a mushrooming U.S. federal corruption probe of top union officials. The investigation has raised questions about UAW President Gary Jones, who a source said was an unnamed official cited in a federal complaint last week detailing alleged embezzlement by union leaders.

The strike has also become a political issue, and both U.S. President Donald Trump and Democrats who want to unseat him in 2020 have weighed in. Trump and Democrats see the votes of UAW members in the Midwest as critical to victory.

GM's workers last went out on a brief two-day strike in 2007 during contract talks. A more painful strike occurred in Flint, Michigan, in 1998, lasting 54 days and costing the automaker more than \$2 billion.



# Why We Throw Stones!

Everyone loves a good story about an Amazon walkout. But when Labor Notes wades into more controversial waters — the pros and cons of a contract, for instance, or a race for union office — we can expect some angry letters.

"Let's not criticize each other," is a common refrain. "We get enough attacks from the boss! Airing disagreements gives ammo to union-busters."

My answer: first of all, those fears are overhyped. Union busters hired to squelch organizing drives mostly play the classics, like "You'll Get Fired and the Plant Will Close," "It's No Use—You Have No Power," and "The Boss Loves You (Give Him Another Chance)." Debates within the union are inside baseball.

But even when employers do seize on a union's real flaws as talking points, the union is vulnerable because the problem exists, not because we're talking about it. How will we ever fix problems if we can't discuss them?

Union busters are sure to make hay of the scandal that Auto Workers leaders allegedly took payoffs from employers. That doesn't mean we should sweep this horrifying behavior under the rug.

Despite this principle, we're sensitive to timing. In the recent union drive at Volkswagen, we held back our criticism of the organizing strategy until after the vote. We wanted the union to win despite its flaws.

But ultimately what helps the boss is a weaker labor movement that doesn't deal with its mistakes—or an undemocratic movement that squanders potential participation.

## Armchair Quarterback?

Another complaint: "Easy for you to say! It's not your union, and you're not in the trenches, so who are you to criticize?"

If you think it's nosy to take an interest in anyone's contract but your own, then Labor Notes isn't the magazine for you. We were founded 40 years ago with the express goal to help activists in different unions cohere together to demand more democracy and militancy across the whole labor movement.

That said, we're not making this stuff up. We ground any criticism in what we hear from rank and filers. We didn't gin up controversy over the New York State Nurses' contract; we reported on it because it was real.

Our analysis of why the Volkswagen drive fell short was bound to leave organizers feeling stung. Nonetheless these conversations are important so that the labor movement can learn from mistakes and up our game.

Of course employers and anti-union groups are to blame for defeats. But it's up to unions to figure out how to beat them.

## Not Neutral

One more: "This article is biased. Aren't journalists supposed to be objec-



tive? You shouldn't take sides."

We strive to be fair, and to deal with disagreements honestly. But Labor Notes has a point of view. We always have.

We're for member-run unions, action on the job, and solidarity across borders. We're against concessions, racism, and partnering with the boss.

We don't quote company bigwigs. We rarely even quote union bigwigs. Our focus is on the rank and file.

Sometimes it's a snap to see where we should stand. Longtime readers aren't surprised when Labor Notes criticizes Teamsters honchos and boosts Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

Other times it's more complicated.

In the recent contest for NewsGuild president, and in the New York Nurses debate, activists who identify with Labor Notes principles didn't all see eye to eye.

In those articles we worked hard to include a variety of voices and to give readers an accurate portrayal of each side. That doesn't mean we came down in the middle, or should.

We're not neutral, but I'm proud that we are credible. We don't fudge numbers or puff up failures. We delete empty rhetoric.

Read Labor Notes long enough and you'll read something you disagree with — sometimes because we got it wrong. Please keep the letters coming, and keep us honest!

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# Postal Group Files Lawsuit Over Pay

The National Association of Postal Supervisors has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Postal Service on behalf of nearly 50,000 managers, supervisors, postmasters and other professional and administrative employees who the group says are owed back pay.

The lawsuit specifically represents Executive and Administrative Schedule employees, who are non-bargaining unit workers and operate under a pay-for-performance system.

According to the lawsuit, EAS pay is not comparable to that of the private sector and the pay-for-performance system is "seriously flawed," which was confirmed by a fact-finding panel that reviewed pay



packages from 2016 to 2019.

"...the Postal Service was and is violating the (Postal Reorganization Act of 1970) Act by inadequately compensating its EAS employees in a variety of manners, and that this inadequate compensation contributes to severe morale problems as well as problems with the attraction and retention of

qualified supervisors and managers," the lawsuit states that the panel concluded.

USPS rejected most of the panel's findings.

"The USPS pay system for its managers and supervisors is broken and inconsistent with the expectations of the law," said Brian J. Wag-

ner, NAPS. "Given continued USPS resistance to the fair administration of the law, we have no choice but to seek the relief to which all supervisors, managers, and postmasters are entitled," he added.

NAPS is seeking retroactive pay to compensate all EAS-covered employees at levels equal to comparable private sector positions from Oct. 1, 2015 (the start of the 2016-2019 pay package) to the date of a court's final judgment in the matter.

The group also wants declaratory relief recognizing NAPS's right to represent all headquarters and area EAS personnel and all postmasters who are members of NAPS.

## HARASSMENT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE ILLEGAL TO BE WRONG

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## Why The High Cost Of Prescription Drugs?

*continued from page 4*

good reasons. There have been news stories of Medicare Advantage plans overcharging Medicare for services not provided to seniors. This issue is important to postal workers as the USPS has mailed newsletters to our retirees touting the availability of Medicare Advantage plans in lieu of FEHB health insurance and traditional Medicare Part B.

Switching to a Medicare Advantage plan is an option our members have and as each person's health care needs and finances are unique, it is a personal choice. Therefore, I will not offer any advice on this subject, but as the information that was provided to our members was lacking, I will relay some facts from the [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov) website.

Medicare Advantage plans are a type of Medicare health plan offered by a private company that contracts with Medicare. Medicare Advantage plans provide all of your Part A and Part B benefits. Medicare Advantage plans include:

- Health Maintenance Organizations
- Preferred Provider Organizations
- Private Fee-for-Service Plans
- Special Needs Plans
- Medicare Medical Savings Account Plans

If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan:

- Most Medicare services are covered through the plan
- Medicare services are not paid for by Original Medicare. Most Medicare Advantage Plans offer prescription drug coverage.

The network, area covered, drug coverage and costs may be different with Medicare Advantage plans than what our members are used to with FEHB coverage and traditional Medicare. I urge our members to get all the information when making this decision. This is of paramount importance: make sure, if you do make this decision, that you elect to suspend your FEHB coverage and NOT cancel your FEHB coverage as the form is very confusing.