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NEWS SERVICE

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APWU Addresses Anthrax Concerns

It has now been clearly established that the U.S. mail has been used as a means of conveying anthrax to targeted individuals. This places postal employees at ground zero of the exposure to this hazardous biological material.

Recognizing the anxiety of employees, the APWU and postal officials at the highest levels, including the postmaster general, have safety and health as their highest priority. A steering committee of high-level postal officials and all of the union and management-association officials meets every day at 10 a.m. to discuss and develop joint responses to this attack on the health of every American citizen. Our responses are not within the traditional labor-management contested issues. We are joined together, labor and management, in this fight to ensure the safety of every postal employee.

We also have a major concern about the perception of the public toward postal services. From retail operations to home delivery, we are the image of the Postal Service, and the steering committee is deeply concerned about projecting a sense of fear in the American public. For more than 200 years, we have developed an acceptance level unparalleled in the service industry. This could be dramatically affected if it is perceived that postal employees fear the product that they deliver.

While postal instructions have been modified to permit the wearing of gloves, masks and other protective apparel, this is not the visual image we wish to project to the citizens we serve. The frequent washing of hands provides superior protection; so for those employees in the public eye, it is suggested that employees refrain from using the protective gear.

Additional agreements have been reached to eliminate the blowing of postal machines during the cleaning process and broad approval to test those employees who have been exposed to suspected anthrax-infected areas. It is agreed that those offices that test positive for anthrax will be closed, and employees will not be permitted to return until certified by public health officials. We will collectively address emerging issues as they arise, because our major concern is your safety.

In these stressful times, it is anticipated that all employees will be concerned, but we cannot be controlled by fear; otherwise, those who perpetuated these deeds will have achieved their objective. Our job is to serve the public through the sale of postage, the maintenance of facilities and equipment and the transportation, processing and delivery of mail. We will not be cowed by those who wish to instill terror in our activities, and we will come through this together.

'NO' Vote Urged Over Divisive Legislation

Fast Track Still Going

Soon, the House Ways and Means Committee, in what is anticipated as a nearly straight party-line vote, will mark-up H.R. 3005, the Fast Track legislation organized labor has long fought. At the very time that a bipartisan consensus is needed to fight America's new war on terrorism, some members of Congress apparently have decided to press ahead on this bill even though it does not include needed labor or environmental protections.

The bill is being pushed by Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) and is a disaster waiting to happen. The APWU vehemently opposes it for a number of reasons and an 800 phone number has been reestablished to call Congress to urge a 'NO' vote on H.R. 3005. The phone number is 1-800-393-1082.

This is not the time to ask the Congress to vote on a controversial, complicated and important issue like trade negotiating authority. Rep. Thomas did not have

the votes to pass Fast Track before Sept. 11, and he ought not to take advantage of our national tragedy to press his narrow and divisive political agenda.

Congress needs to put all its attention and energy into addressing the terrible consequences of the Sept. 11 national tragedy – especially in providing assistance for the victims and their families, ensuring that the hundreds of thousands of workers who have lost their jobs in the last month receive adequate unemployment and health benefits, responding to the threat of terrorism and national healing. The Fast Track bill achieves none of these: it doesn't help us fight terrorism, and it won't get the economy back on track.

The last thing we need in this time of national crisis and economic insecurity is more flawed trade bills that will trade away our jobs. It's time to ask Congress to vote 'NO' on Fast Track. Call 1-800-393-1082.

House Leadership Refuses to Schedule Bill

Air Safety Bill Unanimously Passes Senate

Responding to the September 11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. Senate on Thursday, Oct. 11, passed by a unanimous 100 – 0 vote a major aviation security bill. The bill would place federal marshals on most flights, require strengthened cockpit doors on airlines and allow for pilots to carry guns under FAA supervision.

Key provisions of the Senate bill include:

- Making baggage screeners and law enforcement officers at 142 major airports employees of the U.S. Department of Justice. Smaller airports would be allowed to use local law enforcement officers for security.
- Increasing the number of armed air marshals on flights.
- Requiring fortification of cockpit doors, and allowing the Federal Aviation Administration to permit pilots to carry guns under certain circumstances.
- Increasing anti-hijacking training for flight crews.
- Establishing federal standards for training, testing and supervising air security personnel and putting all airport security under federal jurisdiction.
- Requiring all checked and carry-on baggage to be X-rayed.
- Imposing a \$2.50 per flight passenger fee to pay for the increased security measures.

House Action Is Delayed By Right-Wing Leaders

House Republican Whip Tom DeLay (R-TX) has attempted to block action on the unanimous Senate bill until he secures the votes to keep screeners as private employees under increased federal supervision.

The battle was highlighted in an Oct. 10 CBS Evening News report featuring CBS Commentator Bob Schieffer:

"Dan Rather, Anchor: This latest incident came as legislation to try and strengthen aviation security in some meaningful way remains stuck at the gate in Congress. The sticking point is whether to federalize the airport security force, and tempers are flying over the delay. CBS' Bob Schieffer is on Capitol Hill. Bob.

Bob Schieffer, Reporter: Dan, by most accounts, majorities in both the House and Senate want to do it, but a small group of Republicans who are worried about enlarging the size of the federal government has tied up the legislation to strengthen airport security. It's one of the strangest tie-ups ever, and the bipar-

tisan group pushing this legislation has been left exasperated.

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ): This is rapidly turning into a farce. We need to act.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX): The impact on the economy of having people stay out of airplanes and stay out of airports is staggering.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND): If you don't believe that's an urgent situation, then somehow you've just slept through the last month.

Schieffer: The legislation authorizes more sky marshals, requires background checks and security training for most airport personnel, reinforcements for cockpit doors and other measures. The hang-up is whether these people, the minimum-wage contract employees who screen baggage and passengers, should be replaced by federal workers with law enforcement authority.

Schieffer: Those pushing this legislation say that is the only way to really make the airports safe. But the Republicans opposing this say they're just philosophically opposed to creating a larger federal bureaucracy. They don't state their underlying fear that if those baggage screeners become federal employees, they'll probably join unions, and unions often support Democrats. Debate finally got under way on this tonight, but things are so tangled up, there's no way to say when or if there will ever be a final vote on any of it.

Dan Rather: Bob Schieffer live on Capitol Hill."

APWU To House Leadership

Airport screeners are generally minimum-wage workers with turnover of more than 400 percent. Some have criminal records and some aren't citizens, which means that proper background checks aren't properly done.

This issue is not about enlarging the federal workforce. It's about the public's safety! Simply put, life or death!

Can't one issue be above partisan politics as the bipartisan U.S. Senate has already shown?

If the public feels secure, they will fly airlines again, and airlines can again make profits!

Dec. 2-3 in Las Vegas, prior to Biennial Convention

AFL-CIO Rights Conference Set

The AFL-CIO will mobilize union activists for a Civil and Human Rights Conference on Dec. 2 and 3 in conjunction with its Biennial Convention in Las Vegas.

"Make Every Voice Count" is the theme of the conference, which will explore key civil rights issues including the need for election reform, defending affirmative action, preventing exploitation of immigrant workers, protecting disability rights and fighting hate crimes. The conference also will explore ways to ensure the full participation of women, people of color and other groups in the union movement.

"The struggles for civil rights and workers' rights have been intertwined throughout American history, and one cannot be achieved without the other," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "This conference will help develop strategies to defend our civil and workplace rights and to build unity and power for workers, their families and their communities."

The conference, which is open to all trade unionists, is being developed in coordination with affiliate union civil rights departments and the AFL-CIO constituency groups.

For a registration form (there is no registration fee) and hotel information, please contact:

The AFL-CIO Civil and Human Rights Department, 815 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006. Phone: (202) 637-5273; fax: (202) 508-6903; e-mail: civilrights@afclcio.org.

The conference will be held at the **Paris/Bally's hotel**, the site of the AFL-CIO Convention, **Dec. 3-6.**

For additional information contact :

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