

APWU NEWS/Service

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American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

APWU Testifies on Failure to Brief Workers on Anthrax Cleanup Plans

A congressional subcommittee got an earful at a July 26 hearing on the planned decontamination of the Brentwood mail-processing facility in Washington, DC.

APWU members Joseph P. Curseen and Thomas L. Morris Jr. died shortly after the facility was contaminated by anthrax-laced letters last October. Two additional Brentwood postal workers became gravely ill.

Public health officials and representatives of the Postal Service assured the House Government Reform Committee that the plant could be reopened safely. Testimony came during a hearing at Gallaudet University attended by about 150 people. The Postal Service will use methods similar to those employed to decontaminate the Hart Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill.

APWU Legislative Director Roy Braunstein, testifying on behalf of union President William Burrus, told the panel that workers are very concerned about decontamination plans.

"Because the employees have not been regularly briefed about the progress and procedures, they are less than confident of the results," Braunstein said. "I am certain that you can appreciate the apprehension the employees feel at the prospect of returning to the buildings where their co-workers died and others suffered life-threatening illnesses."

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) was dismayed to learn that APWU members had not received thorough briefings about decontamination plans. Norton has asked the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) to conduct a study to track illnesses and deaths among Brentwood postal workers.

"The acts of cooperation that marked the immediate aftermath of the anthrax attacks have now been replaced with bureaucratic posturing and no place for employee input,"

Braunstein said, speaking on behalf of President Burrus. "The cleanup of the Brentwood and Hamilton [NJ] facilities has been delayed unnecessarily by legal wrangling and indecision."

There also are lingering problems unrelated to health, such as compensation to employees for the loss of personal items left in lockers when the facilities were closed. In addition, the responsibility and cost of transportation from Brentwood and Hamilton to facilities where displaced employees now work has been shifted to the employees, the union said. "Under normal circumstances these might be considered trivial issues; under these unique circumstances, the employees view them as acts of betrayal," Braunstein said.

Fumigating the Brentwood facility is a much more formidable task than was the cleanup of the Senate building, which was completed last fall after contaminated letters were discovered in the offices of Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD). The Hart building's volume is 100,000 cubic feet; Brentwood's is 17.5 million cubic feet.

APWU Safety and Health Specialist Corey Thompson has been assigned to monitor postal-facility cleanup operations for the union. Inquiries should be directed to him at (202) 842-4273.



ROY BRAUNSTEIN

Bush Says Collective Bargaining Reduces Needed 'Flexibility'

New Security Agency's Union Rights Jeopardized

Although the U.S. House on July 26 approved a bill to create a Department of Homeland Security, concerns over the denial of collective bargaining rights to the new agency's employees were expected to delay the measure in the Senate.

Joseph I. Lieberman (D-CT), the head of the panel that prepared a worker-friendly Senate version, said that getting the agency-creation bill passed before the August recess is "in jeopardy."

Lieberman said he did not understand Bush's insistence on dropping civil service protection and collective bargaining rights of federal employees from the bill now pending in the Democrat-led Senate.

"Nobody argues that civil service protection or union rights contributed to September 11th," Lieberman told the CBS program "Face The Nation" on July 28. "In fact, quite the contrary, the firefighters and the police officers whose heroism we celebrated in New York were all union members."

"It's really not only irrelevant but in my opinion, an insult to public employees who are unionized to suggest for some reason they can't carry out their jobs as customs inspectors or on border patrol just because they are members of a union."

In a vote of 295 to 132, the House gave President Bush nearly everything he wanted in creating a department to oversee the nation's security by protecting targets such as the transportation system. But 120 Democrats, including Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-MO), opposed the bill, largely over issues involving workers' rights.

The House bill rejects current civil service laws for the new agency's 170,000 employees, including the right to union representation. Like other federal employees, those in the new agency would not have the right to strike.

The passage of the Homeland Security bill (HR 5005) was preceded by a 229-201 vote on an amendment written by

Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT). This legislation would allow the President to curtail the collective bargaining rights of homeland security employees whenever he declares that a union would have an adverse impact on a group of employees' ability to protect the nation.

Only two House Republicans voted to oppose the Shays amendment - Morella (MD) and Hunter (CA). Morella earlier had led the fight to protect collective bargaining rights in the new agency.

Eleven Democrats joined with most of the Republicans to oppose union rights: Boyd (FL), Cramer (AL), Dooley (CA), Hall (TX), Harman (CA), Hill (IN), Lucas (KY), Schiff (CA), Stenholm (TX), Tauscher (CA), and Taylor (MS).

Homeland Security Office Director Tom Ridge testified in mid-July that allowing the agency's employees to have collective bargaining rights "would be a step in the wrong direction." What was needed instead was managerial "flexibility," Ridge said, adding that the White House was proposing a new civil service procedure that "is at once capable of facilitating the high level of performance necessary to navigate the largely uncharted territory of this new department while remaining accountable to the public, to Congress and to the new department's employees."

Democratic Caucus Chairman Martin Frost (D-TX), challenged Ridge's assessment. The creation of a new department, he said, "is not a chance to dismantle civil service laws." Under a Lieberman proposal, agency employees "would retain their collective bargaining rights unless a majority of employees within the Department or applicable subdivision have, as their primary job duty, intelligence, counterintelligence, or investigative work directly related to terrorism investigation."

APWU supports labor unions and applicable civil service laws in the Homeland Security Department.

Local, State Presidents to Meet at National Convention

The National Presidents' Conference (NPC) will caucus at the national convention, on Sunday, Aug. 11, from 4:30

to 6:30 p.m. in Rooms 102A and 102B. The NPC is a committee of local and state APWU presidents.

Bush Twists Arms for Fast-Track Win

President George W. Bush twisted arms on Capitol Hill on Friday, July 26, right up until the House of Representatives voted 215-212 to approve the Fast-Track Authority Conference Report (HR 3009). Senate approval is likely this week.

Fast-Track authority forbids Congress from modifying trade deals the president negotiates, permitting only yes or no votes on entire trade packages.

The labor movement has opposed fast-track legislation for years, saying that it is bad for workers and environments. Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO), the House Minority Leader, said the bill "fails to enhance human rights, reaffirm worker rights, and promote environmental protection."

In the vote, 25 Democrats joined 190 Republicans to vote YES (WRONG) and 183 Democrats joined 27 Republicans

and 2 Independents to vote NO (RIGHT).

The 25 Democrats who voted WRONG: Bentsen (TX), Carson (OK), Davis (CA), Davis (FL), Dicks (WA), Doolley (CA), Ethridge (NC), Ford (TN), Hall (TX), Harman (CA), Hill (IN), Hinojosa (TX), Jefferson (LA), John (LA), Larsen (WA), Lucas (KY), Matheson (UT), Moore (KS), Moran (VA), Skelton (MO), Smith (WA), Snyder (AR), Stenholm (TX), Tanner (TN), and Tauscher (CA).

The 27 Republicans who voted RIGHT: Bartlett (TX), Capito (WV), Coble (NC), J. Davis (VA), Duncan (TN), Graham (SC), Hayes (NC), Hoekstra (MI), Hostettler (IN), Hunter (CA), Jones (NC), LaTourette (OH), LoBiondo (NJ), McHugh (NY), Norwood (GA), Paul (TX), Quinn (NY), Regula (OH), Rohrabacher (CA), Simmons (CT), Smith (NJ), Stearns (FL), Taylor (NC), Walsh (NY), Weldon (PA), Wilson (SC), and Young (AK).

Snafu Leads to Thousands of Errant PS-50s

A management error has caused the Postal Service to process several thousand PS Form 50s that contained wrong information.

The Notification of Personnel Action forms were processed for employees whose service anniversary pay period was left blank. Why the date was missing is unknown. After management ran a computer program to find all the blank service anniversaries, many APWU members received Form 50s instructing them that they were starting a new waiting period for no-layoff protection.

Employees who received Form 50s with an incorrect date

should contact their Human Resources Office as soon as possible.

The Postal Service has sent instructions to local Human Resources offices to research the proper anniversary pay periods for these employees and then to process corrected Form 50s, to be done as soon as possible. Some offices may take as many as three pay periods to complete the corrections.

The mistaken forms may have been first issued during pay period 13-02. If corrections have not been completed by the end of the third pay period after their discovery, union reps should contact local Human Resources departments.

Indiana, Ohio, Alabama Top COPA Contributors

Led by state conventions in Indiana, Ohio, and Alabama, which contributed more than \$10,000 each, the 2002 COPA Campaign is building a big war chest to help APWU's friends in this year's elections.

Other major state contributors were the Kansas, New York and North Dakota conventions, which each raised more than \$5,000; the California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin conventions, each with more than \$3,000; and Nebraska, South Dakota, and West Virginia, with at least \$2,000 each. State conventions in Idaho, Maine, Michigan, and North Carolina raised more than \$1,000 apiece.

Helped in many cases by passing the hat at union events, many APWU locals made significant contributions to the COPA fund, led by those representing our brothers and sisters in Montgomery, AL (\$6,000).

It's apparent that many union members have stepped up their efforts to support COPA: Has your local answered the call to "Stand up and Fight?"

Here is a breakdown of this year's group contributions to COPA:

Indiana State Convention	\$11,329.75	Central New York Area Local	\$450.00
Ohio State Convention	10,443.55	Bloomington, MN NBA's in Memory of John Akey	440.00
Alabama State Convention	10,303.00	Arkansas State - Spring Meeting	434.00
Montgomery, AL Area Local	6,000.00	Minneapolis, MN Area Local	424.00
Kansas State Convention	5,801.00	Wyoming State Convention	374.10
New York State Convention (and local raffles)	5,110.30	Melbourne, FL Area Local	372.00
North Dakota State Convention	5,014.00	Six-State Caucus - AR, KS, LA, NE, OK, TX	340.00
Wisconsin State Convention	3,716.00	Sioux Falls, SD Area Local	316.00
Minnesota State Convention	3,285.00	Arizona State Convention	305.00
Boston Metro Area Local	3,180.00	Long Island, NY Area Local Auxiliary	300.00
California State Convention	3,030.00	Southwest Florida Area Local	276.50
Topeka, KS Local	2,475.00	APWU National Auxiliary Executive Board	240.00
Central MA Area Local	2,327.00	Illinois APWU Auxiliary	210.00
Nebraska State and Nebraska State Auxiliary Convention	2,305.00	Rochester, NY SCF Area Local - 50-50 Raffle	205.35
West Virginia State Convention	2,013.00	La Porte, IN Local	200.00
South Dakota State Convention	2,000.00	Manhattan, KS Local	200.00
Fort Dodge, IA Local	1,976.00	Jamestown, ND Local	197.00
Northwest Multi State-AK, ID, MT, OR, WA	1,889.00	Greater Cincinnati, OH Area Local	196.50
Akron, OH Area Local	1,817.96	Long Island, NY Area Local Auxiliary - 50-50 Raffle	192.00
Kansas COPA Raffle	1,670.00	Portland, ME Area Local	162.00
Idaho State Convention	1,617.45	Houston, TX Area Local - COPA Raffle	147.81
Honolulu, HI Holiday Membership & Ohana Festivities	1,508.00	Devils Lake, ND Local	135.00
Central Region POWER Conference	1,500.00	Manchester, NH Area Local	130.00
Greater Grand Forks ND Area Local	1,229.00	New Hampshire State Convention	130.00
California All Crafts Seminar	1,200.00	480-481 Michigan Area Local - Annual Picnic	122.00
North Carolina State Convention	1,052.00	Amarillo, TX Local	110.00
Michigan State Convention	1,050.00	Minot, ND Local	110.00
Maine State Convention	1,000.00	California Area Local	104.00
Maryland and DC State Convention	881.00	North Dakota Fall Seminar	104.00
Oklahoma State Convention	798.00	Dakota Central Local	100.00
Fargo, ND Area Local	760.00	South Dakota Auxiliary	100.00
GA, NC, SC Tri-State	750.00	Kansas KAW Valley Area Local Auxiliary	100.00
AR, IA, MO Tri-State	742.00	Kansas KAW Valley Area Local Retirees	100.00
Four-State Caucus - MN, ND, SD & WI	724.00	Presque Isle, ME Local	100.00
Aberdeen, SD Local	722.00	Vermont State Convention	77.00
Long Beach, CA Area Local	720.00	Watertown, SD Local	75.00
Tennessee State Convention	700.00	Glens Falls, NY Local	75.00
Bismarck - Mandan, ND Area Local	598.00	Williston, ND Local	70.00
Utah State Convention	584.00	Pierce, SD Local	50.00
Las Vegas, NV Area Local	563.00	Springfield, IL Local Auxiliary	40.00
Western MI-MN Area Local	543.01	Fayetteville, NC Area Local - Stand Up and Fight Campaign	26.00
Western Area (KS) Supply Center	541.00		
Arkansas State-Fall Meeting	523.00		
Detroit District Area Local	487.00		
Georgia State Convention	485.00		
Kansas Auxiliary	484.00		
Arkansas State Convention	480.00		
President's Conference (hosted by Miami Local)	464.00		

Acknowledgment for Group Contributions

For correct handling and acknowledgment, please send all group contributions to COPA Accounting Department, 1300 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

Please send individual contributions to APWU/COPA, PO Box 96542, Washington, DC 20090-6542.