

APWU Board Issues Resolution Opposing Attack on Iraq

The National Executive Board of the American Postal Workers Union at its Jan. 14 meeting voted to oppose war with Iraq. The resolution states:

"The APWU National Executive Board opposes the pending war with Iraq. This declaration is based on the information made available to the American public at this time. We abhor terrorism, and we endorse all action – diplomatic and military – to appropriately respond to acts of aggression. However, pre-emptive attacks against sovereign states are not consistent with the principles of freedom and respect for all people."

APWU President William Burrus, who introduced the resolution, noted that President Bush's endorsement of pre-emptive strikes constitutes a radical departure from America's long-standing foreign policy.

"There is no reason to rush to put the sons and daughters of America's working families at risk," Burrus said. "And in the absence of imminent danger, there is no justification for killing the innocent children of Iraq. There are certainly enough pressing domestic issues to focus on. We should continue to move cautiously on Iraq."

A week after the APWU announcement, a Washington Post-ABC News poll revealed that seven in 10 Americans favor giving U.N. weapons inspectors more time to search

for weapons of mass destruction. In what the Washington Post story called "one clear sign of public caution on Iraq," 43 percent of respondents to the survey said that U.N. inspectors should have "as much time as they like to scour Iraq." Another 25 percent said the U.N. teams should be given "a few months" or more. Only one-quarter of the respondents to the survey supported a deadline of a few weeks or less.

The poll was not just about Iraq. Survey results also showed that for the first time in the Bush presidency, a majority of Americans disapprove of his handling of the economy. "The number of Americans who regard the economy as healthy has not been lower in the past nine years," the news story said, "and fewer than half supported the tax-cut plan Bush has proposed as a remedy."

Previous polls suggest that a president's popularity increases once a war has begun.

"Perhaps that's the main reason Americans should be wary of a plan to attack Iraq," Burrus said. "The Bush resolve on this issue may be largely political, and that's hardly a good reason to put American lives in jeopardy."

"The administration is advancing a politically bankrupt economic policy and a morally bankrupt foreign policy," Burrus said.

APWU members know which plants are slated for consolidation, the Postal Service has agreed to extend the moratorium on excessing proportionally with the delay in providing the list of consolidations and closings.

In a related matter also covered under the extended agreement, management is obliged to petition the Office of Personnel Management for early retirement opportunities by Feb. 1. In effect since Dec. 19, the contract extension was formally signed by both parties on Jan. 16.

Moratorium on Excessing Extended

Having failed in a timely manner to provide the APWU with a list of USPS facilities that are to be consolidated or closed, the Postal Service has agreed to extend the moratorium on excessing beyond May 31.

The deadline for providing the finalized list of plant consolidations was Dec. 31, 2002. This target date had been set by the two-year contract extension.

With its failure to meet its contractual obligation to let

Local and State COPA Contributions

The following group contributions to the Committee on Political Action (COPA) fund were made during or after the APWU's August 2002 national convention in Minneapolis. The union is currently replenishing its political war chest to help elect pro-worker candidates to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Many APWU locals are already planning their 2003 COPA drives. Is yours?

Reading (PA) Area Local	\$2410	Waterbury (CT) Area Local Retirees Clambake	\$355
Texas Postal Workers Union		Tri-County PA Area Local –	
Multi-Craft Seminar	\$1870	Summer Picnic Fundraiser	\$325
Southern Region POWER Conference	\$1500	Erie (PA) Area Local Retirement Party	\$300
Greater CT Area Local		Georgia Fall Seminar	\$265
Annual Retirees' Brunch	\$1500	Delaware State Fall Meeting,	
Colorado Springs Area Local		Installation of Officers	\$258
2002 COPA Drive	\$1433	New York Metro Area Local Annual Picnic	\$886
Billings (MT) Local		Arkansas State Convention	\$225
Training and Installation Dinner	\$1350	Long Island Area Local Auxiliary	\$198
Tri-State Conference (MD-DC, VA, WV)	\$ 785	South Jersey Area Local	\$195
Manchester (NH) Area Local –		Southwest Florida Area Local –	
Raffles, Breakfast, and Golf Tournament	\$ 600	Local Meeting 50/50's	\$810
California State –		Las Vegas Area Local	\$575
Sacramento Retirement Seminar	\$ 550	Springfield (MO) Area Local Auxiliary	\$100
Owensboro (KY) Area Local	\$ 550	Illinois Postal Workers Auxiliary	\$ 86
APWU Presidents' Conference (Seattle)	\$ 510		

COPA Funds Collected at National Convention*

Birmingham (AL) Area Local	\$3275	Gainesville (FL) Area Local	\$536
Minneapolis Area Local	\$2221	Phoenix Metro Area Local	\$505
National Auxiliary	\$1300	Honolulu Area Local	\$289
San Francisco Local	\$1025	New Jersey Mid State Area Local	\$275
New York Metro Area Local	\$ 886	Houston Area Local	\$187
Massachusetts State Convention (Correction from \$350)	\$ 810	Missouri State Auxiliary	\$100
Las Vegas Area Local	\$ 575	Chicago Local POWER	\$ 60

* These contributions have not previously been reported in a News Service. Some COPA contributions made during the convention were reported in News Service Convention Bulletin No. 3.

Early Retirement Options

(This is a corrected version of an article that appeared in the January/February 2003 edition of The American Postal Worker. It is also posted on the APWU Web site, at www.apwu.org.)

Under the law, federal agencies, including the Postal Service, cannot grant Voluntary Early Retirement opportunities to their employees without approval from the Office of Personnel Management. In recent years, OPM has sometimes granted Voluntary Early Retirement authority to help agencies restructure or "downsize" their workforce.

Voluntary Early Retirement

CSRS Employees: If you are covered under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), you must be at least 50 years old and have at least 20 years of federal service (including military service) to be eligible for Voluntary Early Retirement, or you may retire at any age if you have at least 25 years of federal service.

Your annuity payments will begin as soon as you retire, but they will be reduced by 2 percent for each year that you are younger than 55 at the time you retire.

Under either of the conditions above, you must have at least five years of creditable service under the Civil Service Retirement System, and you must have been in a pay status for at least one of the two years immediately preceding your retirement (also known as the "one-out-of-two rule").

FERS Employees: If you are enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), you must be 50 years of age with 20 years of service or have 25 years of service regardless of age to be eligible for voluntary early retirement or discontinued service annuity. There is no age penalty for a FERS employee requesting either of these retirement opportunities.

'Discontinued Service' Retirement

Employees who are "involuntarily separated" may be entitled to what is known as Discontinued Service Retirement, which provides immediate, but possibly reduced annuities. The following are the most common circumstances under which employees may be considered "involuntarily separated" and become eligible for Discontinued Service Retirement:

- Reductions-in-Force (RIFs);
- Positions abolished, or agency lacks funding for certain positions;
- Excessing, reassigning, or transferring job functions to a facility outside an employee's commuting area;
- Transfer of function outside the commuting area;
- Expiring appointments of workers hired for limited terms of service;
- An employee's failure to continue to meet qualification requirements for his or her position (provided that the separation is non-disciplinary and the separation is initiated by the agency);
- Separation during probation due to performance (not misconduct).

Employees facing involuntary separation may be eligible for Discontinued Service Retirement unless they are being separated for "cause" – such as poor performance, misconduct or delinquency.

CSRS Employees: Under Discontinued Service Retirement, CSRS employees are eligible to start receiving annuities immediately, but the annuities may be reduced if you are younger than 55.

If you are an involuntarily separated

CSRS employee, you are eligible for Discontinued Service Retirement if:

- You have not turned down an offer to transfer to another job in a facility within reasonable commuting distance;
- You are at least 50 years old and have at least 20 years of federal service (including military), or you may retire at any age if you have at least 25 years of federal service;
- You are vested in the CSRS with at least five years of service;
- You are separating from a position subject to CSRS coverage; and
- You have been in a pay status for at least one of the two years preceding your retirement, (i.e., you meet the "one-out-of-two rule" requirement).

FERS Employees: Discontinued Service Retirement eligibility rules for FERS employees are the same as those for CSRS employees, with the following exceptions:

- There is no age penalty for FERS employees.
- The "one-out-of-two rule" does not apply; there is no requirement that you must have been in a pay status for at least one of the two years preceding your retirement.

Both FERS and CSRS employees may have their unused annual leave credited as service in calculating the length of their federal service in order to qualify for Discontinued Service Retirement.

FERS employees who are at least 55 years old with at least 10 years of creditable service have always had the right to apply for Voluntary Optional Retirement benefits (not to be confused with the Voluntary Early Retirement discussed above). However, under optional retirement, the employee is penalized 5 percent for each year under age 62. This penalty can be avoided if the retiring employee defers his or her annuity until he or she reaches the age of 62.

Before deciding to seek Voluntary Early Retirement or Discontinued Service Retirement, make sure you have all the facts by consulting your Human Resources Department.

CSRS EARLY OUT COMPUTATION ESTIMATES				
(Estimates based on retiring during the first pay period of January 2003)				
Level/Step	4/0	5/0	7/0	9/0
High 3	\$40,059	\$40,993	\$43,102	\$45,573
55 Years Old + 30 Years of Service				
Annual	\$22,539	\$23,059	\$24,345	\$25,636
Monthly	1,878	1,922	2,028	2,137
There is a 2% reduction in the annuity for every year the employee is under 55 years of age.				
52 Years Old + 30 Years of Service + 6% reduction				
Annual	\$21,186	\$21,675	\$22,790	\$23,997
Monthly	1,765	1,806	1,899	2,008
50 Years Old + 30 Years of Service + 10% reduction				
Annual	\$20,285	\$20,753	\$21,820	\$23,071
Monthly	1,690	1,729	1,818	1,922
50 Years Old + 20 Years of Service + 10% reduction				
Annual	\$13,073	\$13,374	\$14,052	\$14,668
Monthly	1,089	1,115	1,172	1,239
55 Years Old + 25 Years of Service				
Annual	\$18,532	\$18,959	\$19,935	\$21,078
Monthly	1,544	1,580	1,660	1,756
The example below shows how the calculations were done.				
53 Years Old + 25 Years of Service				
2% X 2 (difference between ages 55 and 53) = 4% reduction				
	\$18,531.91	\$18,959.26	\$19,934.68	\$21,077.61
	X .04	X .04	X .04	X .04
	-741.28	-758.37	-797.39	-843.10
	\$18,531.91	\$18,959.26	\$19,934.68	\$21,077.61
	-741.28	-758.37	-797.39	-843.10
Annual	\$17,790.63	\$18,200.89	\$19,137.29	\$20,234.51
Monthly	1,482.55	1,517.00	1,595.00	1,686.00

Mailing List Update Update

APWU National Headquarters recently updated the mailing list for the News Service.

While some individuals who previously received the News Service bulletins may no longer be included on the revised list, copies of the News Service will

continue to be sent to all APWU-identified work locations, as well as to all local and state organizations.

The News Service also may be found in two different formats at the APWU Web site. Past bulletins, too, are available at www.apwu.org.