

General Time Line Set for Early Outs

APWU President William Burrus and Vice President Cliff Guffey met with postal officials today to discuss implementation of the agreement to offer early retirement to eligible APWU-represented employees. A general time line has been established for management to notify eligible employees, and for workers to express interest in early retirement and make their final decisions.

USPS headquarters will instruct area-level officials to identify eligible employees and send them Letters of Interest for Early Retirement. The letters will require a response by a specific date. Postal headquarters will also instruct managers to review the personnel file of each employee who is considered eligible, to ensure that he or she meets the criteria for early retirement. A specific date for the initiation of the process will be determined at the area level; it is mutually expected to begin by the second week of July.

The early retirements are expected to take effect during October 2003 and February 2004 so that they will not adversely affect operations during heavy mailing periods. The final determination on dates will depend on the number of employees in an installation who elect to retire early as well as their skills.

At the time early retirement is approved for an employee, a specific date will be established for termination of his or

her USPS employment. In those circumstances where employees who elect to retire cannot be replaced from the existing complement, discussions will occur on other means of replacing them through reassignment, training or transfer.

Contrary to announcements by some area-level postal officials, opportunities for early retirement will be offered to all eligible APWU employees, pursuant to the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and within the rules established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Agreement has been reached to hold a tripartite meeting with officials of OPM. The meeting will be held at the earliest possible date, depending on the availability of the three parties.

OPM notified the union on June 16 that it had approved the Postal Service's request for authority to offer Voluntary Early Retirement. The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and the USPS, approved last December, required management to seek authority to offer early retirement. The Postal Service formally sought approval in a petition to OPM on Jan. 23. Approval of the petition was delayed pending the publication of new regulations governing early retirements as part of the Homeland Security Act.

Sen. Carper Introduces Postal Reform Legislation

On June 18, Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) introduced a bill that could become a vehicle for implementing a wide range of legislative reforms affecting the Postal Service.

Carper's bill, the *Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act* (S. 1285), will not likely be considered before the President's Commission on the Postal Service submits its recommendations for postal change to the Bush Administration and Congress, but he said that he hopes his bill will help guide the commission as it completes its work.

"My bill does not attempt to reform the Postal Service by rolling back universal service or taking pay, benefits or collective bargaining rights away from employees," Carper said in a press release announcing the introduction of his bill.

The bill would create a new process for closing or consolidating plants and post offices that would make it harder for affected communities to intervene.

Among other provisions, Carper's bill would:

- Rename the Postal Rate Commission the Postal Regulatory Commission and require the mailers, the Postal Service and the new commission "to agree to a schedule of rate increases over a period of time to make them more predictable and less frequent."
- Give the Postal Service the authority to react more quickly to revenue demands brought about by sharp spikes in fuel costs or other crises.
- Grant the commission the power to issue subpoenas and to punish the Postal Service for violating rate and service regulations.
- Give the Postal Service authority to negotiate service

agreements with individual mailers, provided that the "revenue generated from them covers all costs attributable to the Postal Service and results in a greater contribution to the Postal Service's institutional costs."

- Require the Postal Regulatory Commission to set service standards and performance goals for first-class mail and other products that are protected by the postal monopoly. The Postal Service would be required to adhere to these standards in developing a list of facilities targeted for closure or consolidation.
- Create a new Postal Network Modernization Commission to approve or alter the list of postal facilities targeted for closure or consolidation. The commission's recommendations would then be carried out, subject to the president's approval, unless Congress passed a resolution disapproving them.
- Preserve the Postal Services' monopoly on letter mail and its sole access to the mailbox.
- Require the Postal Service to focus on its core mission of processing and delivering mail and packages by prohibiting it from engaging in other lines of business, such as e-commerce.
- Create two categories of mail, Market Dominant and Competitive, with their own rate structures, to prevent the Postal Service from using revenue from its monopoly products (first-class, periodical and standard mail) to underwrite expenses for its competitive products (priority, international and parcel post).

"We look forward to working with Sen. Carper to address the union's concerns when Congress begins shaping postal reform legislation," said APWU President William Burrus.

Moe Biller Labor Lecture Series

"The Future of the Postal Service: Is Legislative or Regulatory Change Essential?" is the topic for the second annual Moe Biller Labor Issues Conference, set for Tuesday, July 22, at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC.

The day-long conference is likely to be the last chance for opinion leaders, stakeholders and policy makers to exchange views about important postal issues before the President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service delivers its report.

Key members of Congress and mailing-industry leaders are expected to participate, along with union officials and consumer advocates.

The conference will examine the role of government in assuring postal services for all communities; whether a private enterprise would focus more on the needs of individuals or large mailers; how to allocate the costs of universal service, and regulation of postal service providers.

The Moe Biller Labor Issues Conference is endowed by the American Postal Workers Union in honor of its

President Emeritus. Its goal is to build a tradition of presenting dialog from a wide range of perspectives on issues of importance to working families.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Capital Hilton Hotel for the night of July 21. The specially-negotiated room rate is \$159, plus tax. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-HILTONS or 202-393-1000. Please request the special rate when making reservations.

There is a fee of \$100 per person for registrations received by July 18, and \$125 per person for reservations received later. The fee includes lunch.

For registration forms and additional information, visit the union's web site at www.apwu.org or call the Secretary-Treasurer's office at 202-842-4215

Registrations can be made online after June 27, faxed to 202-842-8530, or mailed to: Robert L. Tunstall, Secretary-Treasurer, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Secretary-Treasurers' Conference

Presidents, vice presidents, secretary-treasurers, treasurers, executive board members, trustees, and any other officers with fiduciary responsibilities are invited to attend the final Secretary-Treasurer Seminar of 2003, which will be held Aug. 21 to Aug. 23 in New York City.

Presentations will be made on preparation of reports required by the IRS and the Department of Labor. Among the topics covered at the seminar are LM reports and IRS forms W2, W3, 941, and 990.

The three-day session begins at 8 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 21, and ends at 2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 23.

Registration forms are available at the August Calendar of Events page at www.apwu.org. Complete the registration form and mail it to the national Secretary-Treasurer's office at the address provided. The registra-

tion fee for the Basic and Advanced courses is \$50; computer courses cost \$100. The registration fee should accompany the completed registration form and needs to be at the APWU national Secretary-Treasurer's office by Aug. 5. Registration fees are refundable for cancellations received prior to that date.

The conference is being conducted at the Hilton New York in Rockefeller Center. To make reservations, call 800-445-8667 (800-HILTONS) or visit the Hilton Web site, www.hilton.com. To get the guaranteed room rate of \$139 (plus sales and occupancy taxes of about \$20), reserve by July 21, and identify yourself as a participant in the APWU Secretary-Treasurer Seminar.

If you have any questions, please contact the Secretary-Treasurer's office at 202-842-4215, or by fax at 202-842-8530.

Eight-Digit Employee ID Numbers To Replace Social Security Numbers

The Postal Service notified the American Postal Workers Union earlier this month that it would begin using eight-digit employee identification numbers in replacement of Social Security numbers on employee records.

The new employee identification numbers will be included on earnings statements beginning pay period 14-03 (paychecks dated July 3).

Absent any business-related need for the Social Security number, the employee identification number will replace the Social Security number in all postal systems, beginning with the Time and Attendance System (TACS).

In a meeting on June 12, the Postal Service explained that it wants to remove Social Security numbers from any documents or reports that are available on the work-

room floor to help protect employees from identity theft.

Social Security numbers will continue to be part of payroll information, however, because the USPS must report the numbers to the Internal Revenue Service. But with the substitution of employee identification numbers, Social Security numbers gradually will become less evident on printed material.

The Postal Service will randomly assign the new numbers to employees. This will assure that employees who work side-by-side do not have sequential numbers. Couples who both work for the USPS also will have unrelated numbers.

The computer system will automatically assign the next available number to new hires. Overall, the switch to the eight-digit numbers will be a gradual one.

COLA Update

An increase in the Consumer Price Index in May means that if the adjustment were made based on the fourth month in the six-month measuring period, the fourth Cost-Of-Living Adjustment under the National Agreement would give employees an annual raise of \$270.

The adjustment, which is subject to fluctuation in the next two months of accounting, would amount to a 13-

cent per hour increase, which works out to \$10.40 per pay period. The fourth COLA will be based on the July 2003 index point.

Any increase will be effective as of Sept. 6 (pay period 20-2003) and will be reflected in Sept. 26 paychecks.

Pay scales can be seen at www.apwu.org.

Retirement, Injury Compensation Conference

The last *News Service* bulletin (Vol. 33, No. 11, June 16) inadvertently omitted some registration information for the APWU seminars on retirement counseling, injury compensation, and union-building, scheduled for July 9-12 in Santa Clara, CA:

The registration fee for the four-day event is \$80, and includes graduation luncheon on Saturday, July 12. Late registration will be accepted on a space-available basis, but no walk-ins will be permitted.

Registration forms are available at www.apwu.org. Send the completed form and payment to: American Postal Workers Union, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005, Attention: Human Relations Department.

Rooms have been blocked at the Hilton Santa Clara (about seven miles from San Jose International Airport) at a special APWU room rate of \$109 per night. Reservations should be made directly with the hotel at 408-330-0001.