

Voluntary Early Retirement

Agreement Reached: Employees Who Declined VER Last Fall Will Get Another Opportunity

The APWU and the USPS agreed Jan. 12 that employees who were offered but declined early retirement on Oct. 31, 2003, will be given another opportunity. APWU President William Burrus announced the agreement after meeting with postal managers.

To take advantage of this opportunity, employees who turned down early retirement on Oct. 31, 2003, must notify the union immediately if they are interested in receiving another Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) offer. The APWU will provide management with a list of interested employees by Feb. 2, 2004. (See box below; the form is also available at www.apwu.org.)

Employees affected by this decision who fail to provide their names to the APWU prior to the deadline will not be permitted to retire early. Only those employees who de-

clined early retirement last fall should submit their names.

"Coupled with a wide-ranging agreement reached with the Postal Service on Dec. 19, the latest settlement puts an end to a bitter dispute between the APWU and postal management," said APWU President William Burrus.

In December 2002, union members ratified an extension of the 2000-2003 Collective Bargaining Agreement that included provisions for Voluntary Early Retirement for all eligible APWU-represented employees. Last summer, however, management sought to limit the categories and number of employees who could retire early.

"I am pleased that the USPS has finally agreed to live up to its commitment to APWU members on this important issue," Burrus said.

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Job Title _____ Craft _____ Level _____

Work Location _____
(Name of installation or facility) (Address)

I was offered Voluntary Early Retirement effective Oct. 31, 2003, but declined. I am interested in VER in 2004.

Complete in time for the union to submit to the USPS by Feb. 2 and return to:

Industrial Relations, Attn: APWU VER-Form
American Postal Workers Union
1300 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005

Fax: 202-842-8587

Union Submits Names, Awaits USPS Action on Employees Denied VER

The APWU has provided the Postal Service with the names of approximately 3,300 employees who notified the union that they were eligible for early retirement on Oct. 31, 2003, but were denied the opportunity. An agreement between the union and management reached on Dec. 19, 2003, requires the Postal Service to offer those employees Voluntary Early Retirement.

The Dec. 19 agreement resolved a series of disputes over early retirement. It required the Postal Service to offer Voluntary Early Retirement to all eligible APWU-represented employees, including those who were eligible as of Oct. 31, 2003, but did not receive a Statement of Interest letter from the Postal Service, and those who completed a Statement of Interest but were not permitted to retire early or received no response to their Statement of Interest from management.

The Dec. 19 agreement also required the Postal Service to promptly petition the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for authority to offer VER to eligible Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Craft employees in Level 6 positions and above, for Material Distribution Center employees, and for employees covered by the IT/ASC Collective Bargain-

ing Agreement or the Operating Services Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The employees whose names were submitted to the USPS fell in one of the categories outlined above. Their names have been posted on the union's Web site, www.apwu.org.

In addition, the Dec. 19 agreement required management to identify employees who become eligible for early retirement during the period between Nov. 1, 2003, and Feb. 29, 2004, and offer them VER. (For Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Craft employees in Level 6 positions and above, Material Distribution Center employees, and those covered by the IT/ASC or the Operating Services Collective Bargaining Agreements, OPM approval must be obtained first.)

The Postal Service will offer VER to eligible, APWU-represented employees in 2004. However, if operational needs require, the retirement date for Retail Clerks, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle craft employees in Level 6 positions and above, and Material Distribution Center employees may be delayed, but not later than July 1, 2005.

National Presidents' Conference

The Connecticut Postal Workers Union will be the host for the first National Presidents' Conference of 2004, set for Feb. 21-23 at the Foxwoods Resort.

Room reservations can be made by calling 800-369-9663.

Although the conference begins on Sunday, Feb. 22, training sessions will be offered the day before. An article 12 presentation will be made by APWU Clerk Craft

Director Jim McCarthy and NBA Frank Giordano. Also on Feb. 21, Steve Albanese will conduct a workshop on the FMLA.

To register for the conference, please complete the form available at www.apwu.org and send it as soon as possible to Connecticut Postal Workers Union, Attn: Mike Ganino, President, 118 Infield St., Bridgeport, CT 06606. Please include a check or money order for \$50 payable to: APWU Presidents' Conference.

Congress Schedules Hearings On USPS-Overhaul Legislation

Two key congressional committees will hold a series of hearings through early next month on proposals to change how the USPS operates and treats its workers and customers.

The hearings will consider a wide range of recommendations – including those made last summer by the President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service – that could be incorporated into legislation and considered for passage later this year.

On Jan. 28, The House Government Reform Committee's Special Panel on Postal Reform and Oversight (chaired by John McHugh, R-NY) will hear testimony from the Postal Service, the General Accounting Office (GAO), and the Treasury Department.

APWU President William Burrus will be among those testifying on Feb. 5, in Chicago, where the panel will convene to hear the views of postal employee organizations. A third session has been set for Feb. 11, in Washington, to hear from mailing industry representatives and USPS competitors.

The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee (chaired by Susan Collins, R-ME) has tentatively scheduled hearings in Washington on Feb. 3 and 4. The Senate hearings are expected to feature many of the same witnesses – including Burrus – invited by the House panel.

Both Sen. Collins and Rep. McHugh have announced that they will draft postal reform legislation for introduction early this spring.

Judge's Ruling Postpones Imposition Of Onerous Reporting Requirements

Regulations that would have burdened many local unions with expensive reporting requirements and that were to take effect Jan. 1 were delayed one year by federal Judge Gladys Kessler, who ruled on New Year's Eve that unions needed more time to comply with "extensive and sophisticated" changes approved last fall by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Kessler said that the Labor Department had sprung a complicated and expensive reporting requirement on nearly 5,000 unions in October, and said that living up to the requirements would cause unions "irreparable harm." She ruled that there would be no discernible harm to the public interest in keeping existing reporting rules, "especially when that status quo has been deemed acceptable by the Department of Labor for over 40 years."

"[Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao] has simply failed to offer any reasonable justification for requiring such far-reaching changes to take place," so quickly, Kessler wrote, adding that the secretary offered no reason to "act with such extraordinary urgency."

The APWU vigorously opposed the proposed regulations, as did many other unions. The AFL-CIO filed the lawsuit that prompted Kessler's ruling.

The Department of Labor has since requested reconsideration of the judge's ruling.

In a Jan. 9 teleconference, APWU Secretary-Treasurer Robert L. Tunstall advised local officers that they should not change their reporting practices.

Secretary-Treasurers' Conferences

Presidents, secretary-treasurers, trustees, and other officers with fiduciary responsibilities are invited to attend an upcoming Secretary-Treasurer Seminar. The next conference will be Feb. 26-28 in Houston.

Registration forms are available on the Calendar of Events page at www.apwu.org. Complete the registration form and mail it to the national Secretary-Treasurer's office. The registration fee, which should accompany the completed registration form, is \$50; the fee for computer courses is \$100. Registration fees are refundable for cancellations received prior to Feb. 4.

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 \$115 (plus sales and occupancy taxes of about \$20), reserve by Feb. 4, and identify yourself as a participant in the APWU Secretary-Treasurer Seminar.

Secretary-Treasurers' conferences also are scheduled for Fairborn, OH (March 4-6) and Hartford, CT (March 11-13). Additional conferences are being planned for the Western and Eastern regions.

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

The conference is being conducted at the Hilton Hous-

Committee Sets Rules for 2004 Election

The APWU National Election Committee met Jan. 5-9 in Washington and adopted rules to govern the 2004 APWU election of national union officers.

The committee consists of Anthony "Tony" Turner (Manchester, NH, Area Local), V. Jeanette Carlton (Dayton, OH, Area Local), Carlton R. Williams (Dallas,

TX, Area Local), Rocky Sprowles (Kentucky Postal Workers Union), and J. Lloyd Newman (North Alabama Area Local).

The complete rules will appear in the March/April issue of the *American Postal Worker*, which will be mailed to members in late February.



The 2004 APWU Election Committee, from left: Jeanette Carlton, Carlton Williams, Rocky Sprowles, Tony Turner (Chairman), and Lloyd Newman.

Basic Arbitration Training Conference

The APWU Research and Education Department is hosting a Basic Arbitration Training Conference from March 1 to 7 in the Boston area. The conference is designed to acquaint local union officers and stewards with the techniques needed to effectively prepare a case for basic arbitration.

The conference will be at the Sheraton Braintree Hotel. Call 800-325-3535 by Monday, Feb. 16, and identify yourself as attending the APWU conference to secure the negotiated rate of \$89 per night (plus tax).

Classes and topics to be covered include: Preparing a Case for Arbitration, Identifying and Framing the Issues, Exhibits and Stipulations, Opening Statements, Rules of Evidence, Examination of Witnesses, and Closing Statements.

The registration fee is \$150. Participants must submit a letter from their local or state presidents (on union letterhead) that authorizes their attendance. The conference registration deadline is Feb. 16. Registration forms can be found at www.apwu.org.