

Membership Ratifies Four-Year Contract

APWU members ratified a four-year Collective Bargaining Agreement by a vote of 84,486 to 12,016, in balloting that concluded Jan. 12. The new National Agreement, which is retroactive to Nov. 21, 2006, will expire Nov. 20, 2010.

“I consider this contract to be among our union’s strongest achievements,” said APWU President William Burrus. “Wage increases, upgrades, and Cost-of-Living Adjustments were secured, and ‘no-layoff’ protection and other benefits were continued.”

The agreement provides for a 1.3 percent wage increase, effective Nov. 25, 2006; upgrades for all APWU-represented employees, effective Feb. 16, 2008; a 1.2 percent raise, effective Nov. 21, 2009; and two Cost-of-Living Adjustments each year.

New contract language will result in the conversion of approximately 10,000 part-time flexibles, and will eliminate Clerk Craft PTFs as a workforce category in offices of 200 work-years or more, effective Dec. 1, 2007. (A list of offices of 200 work-years or more will be posted at www.apwu.org as soon as it is provided by the Postal Service.) The agreement also will change the restrictions on the use and number of casual employees.

The Postal Service will pay 95 percent of healthcare premiums for employees enrolled in the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan, effective in 2008. The employees’ share of healthcare premium costs in other plans will increase 1 percent each year in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011.

In accordance with Article 13.9.C of the APWU Constitution, members of the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee unanimously approved the agreement before it was mailed to union members for ratification. The mailing took place Dec. 18-20, 2006.

More than 215,000 ballots were mailed to union members covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In addition, in an unprecedented organizing effort, non-members were invited to vote, provided they completed union sign-up cards enclosed in their ratification packets.

In a letter accompanying the mailing to non-members, Burrus wrote, “The stakes are too high for you to defer to others the decision on your future. The only way you can have a voice in whether or not the changes to the National Agreement are enacted is by becoming a union member.” More than 700 non-members did so.



Rank-and-File Advisory Bargaining Committee members Thomasine Derricks, Princella Vogel, and Jack Dougherty observe the vote count in Washington on Jan. 12. Vogel chairs the committee.

“We are very pleased that so many new members joined the APWU as a result of this process,” Burrus said. “This is the most successful short-term organizing effort in union history.”

Participation among members was above 40 percent, which is a significant improvement over previous balloting. Nevertheless, Burrus said that he had hoped for a higher level of membership involvement in the vote.

“APWU-represented employees have made substantial progress,” the union president said. “That is what the negotiation process is all about.”

The next step, he said, is to convert the agreement into contractual language. “Once that is done, the Postmaster General and I will affix our signatures to the official document.”

The vote count occurred Jan. 12, under the supervision of the American Arbitration Association. Members of the Rank-and-File Committee monitored the vote count. Princella Vogel, chairperson of the committee, announced the results at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, shortly after the counting of ballots was complete.

Results showing the voting by individual locals will be posted on the APWU Web site as soon as they become available. The local-by-local count is expected to take several weeks.

An Open Letter To the Union Membership

The membership of the American Postal Workers Union has decided the outcome of the 2006 contract negotiations and has resoundingly approved the tentative agreement.

A total of 96,502 votes were cast by the members, which included 727 postal employees who joined the APWU to participate in the referendum voting. Unfortunately, a majority of the members did not exercise their right to express their approval or disapproval of the negotiated provisions that will affect their lives over the four-year term of the agreement.

This will be the 12th collective bargaining agreement representing Clerk, Maintenance, and Motor Vehicle Service Craft employees working for the United States Postal Service, which was created in 1971. The 2006 negotiations initiated fundamental changes in wages, benefits, and conditions of employment, and these have now been endorsed by the membership.

I extend my appreciation and that of the negotiating team for the expression of confidence in our efforts. But because of the significant changes negotiated in this agreement, it is disappointing that a higher percentage of the membership chose not to participate in the ratification process.

It is understood, of course, that the individual focus of working people is spread among many personal responsibilities, and that voting on a contractual agreement cannot result in instant positive change. I believe the impact of the contractual changes are of such significance, however, that it is difficult to accept that so many members would fail to place a mark on a piece of paper and take it to work with them. Although it is generally understood that those who do not vote are casting a silent vote in the affirmative, I would have preferred an actual response.

APWU-represented non-members were provided their first opportunity to take part in union activities by being given the opportunity to ratify the tentative agreement – as long as they joined the union. The decision of more than 700 non-members to join their union represents the most successful short-term organizing drive in our history. Each new member is welcomed, and we thank them for their participation.

The next stage in the process is the finalization of the specific contractual language necessary to reflect the newly negotiated provisions. Upon completion of that process, the postmaster general and I will affix our signatures to the official document.

The dates of the retroactive pay and the identification of the 200 work-year offices are expected to be available within the next 14 days and will be published as soon as they are known.

Thank you for being a member of the APWU. And whether you expressed your support or your opposition, thank you for voting on the tentative contract.

– William Burrus, President

Anti-Consolidation Resolution Introduced in House

In a demonstration of the growing level of concern over the Postal Service's consolidation plans, U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) introduced a non-binding resolution on Jan. 7 seeking to ensure "a maximum degree of effective and regular postal service to all communities."

Emerson urges the Postal Service to take "all necessary steps to ensure that post offices are not closed or consolidated." The resolution calls for mail service to continue even in "rural areas and small towns where

post offices may not be self-sustaining."

The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which has jurisdiction over the Postal Service. The committee is now under the leadership of Henry Waxman (D-CA).

The APWU Legislative Department sent an e-mail message to union activists encouraging them to ask their U.S. House representatives to co-sponsor the resolution.