

Union Calls for Campaign to Defeat Anti-Postal Worker Senate Bill

Teleconference Set for Aug. 3

APWU President William Burrus has called on locals and state organizations to organize opposition to a Senate bill that contains a provision that would be catastrophic for postal workers. The Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Funding Reform Act of 2009 (S. 1507) was intended to provide temporary financial relief to the cash-strapped Postal Service, but an amendment to the bill has rendered it unacceptable to postal workers and the union.

Because a vote on the bill is expected before the Senate's summer recess starts Aug. 7, activists must move quickly, Burrus said. The national union will hold a **teleconference** for local and state leaders on **Monday, Aug. 3, at 2 p.m. EDT**, to discuss the issue. Officers who plan to participate should call 202-842-4250 for the phone number and access code.

The bill would require arbitrators ruling on postal contracts to take into account the financial health of the Postal Service. "Given the severity of the USPS financial crisis, if this bill passes, we can anticipate that in the next round of negotiations, many of the things

our members take for granted – such as cost-of-living increases, raises, and protection against layoffs – will be at risk," Burrus said.

"I call on every APWU local to generate messages to their senators based on a 1 to 5 ratio of their members," Burrus said. "This legislation would destroy collective bargaining for postal workers. Under current law, arbitrators must consider the 'comparability' of postal wages to employees in the private sector who perform similar work. After more than two decades, this bill would create an entirely new standard."

"By singling out this one factor, the amended bill would give the Postal Service's short-term financial conditions supremacy over all other relevant considerations. It will make the bargaining process subject to all-out manipulation.

"We must do everything we can to defeat this reactionary amendment," Burrus said. "We must start by generating 50,000 contacts from postal employees to their U.S. senators."

Burrus: USPS Initiatives Are Acts of Surrender

Closing stations and branches and reducing mail delivery to five days per week "will unquestionably have a negative effect on the postal monopoly," APWU President William Burrus told a House subcommittee at a hearing July 30. Such actions "will impede the Postal Service's ability to compete" when the economy rebounds.

"These are acts of surrender – when the outcome of the battle is still in doubt," he said.

The USPS provided the panel with a list of 677 stations and branches in Level 24-and-above post offices identified to date for possible closure or consolidation. (The list is posted at www.apwu.org). Management expects to complete the review by Oct. 2.

Burrus testified that the contract says that "all existing retail operations will remain within the installation of which they are a part and all future retail operations established within the jurisdiction of an installation shall become a part of that installation." He added: "I expect that postal management will fully comply

with this contractual agreement."

"The union will vigorously contest these actions," Burrus said after the hearing. "Many locals have already notified their communities, their legislators, and the media about the possibility of station closings."

The national union has been seeking legislative relief from the Postal Service financial crisis and many locals have assisted in that effort. A Senate bill (S. 1507) that would have provided financial relief, was amended to include an anti-worker provision that would be devastating to collective bargaining. (*See story above.*)

The APWU has intervened in proceedings by the Postal Regulatory Commission, which is preparing "an advisory opinion" on the station-and-branch initiative. The union has requested a hearing at which the APWU could cross-examine postal witnesses and offer rebuttal testimony. The APWU also suggested that the commission conduct field hearings to get input from the public.