

APWU NEWS

Bulletin

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

WILLIAM BURRUS, President MYKE REID, Editor

In Historic Speech, NALC's Young Emphasizes 'Need to Work Together'

In an inspiring speech that brought rank-and-file members of APWU crafts to their feet several times, National Association of Letter Carriers President Bill Young gave an emphatic call for standing together to get this country headed back in the right direction.

"Something's got to change, and we've got make it happen," Young said during an address to APWU delegates on the first day of the convention. "The men and women of the NALC are ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the men and women of the APWU to make sure that it does."

Young said that the most important thing was to get America's perspective back in order.

A study by the Economic Policy Institute identified three criteria, Young said, that must be met for an employment opportunity to qualify as a "good job." The first is that the job pay at least \$35,000 annually.

"Can you believe that?" Young said. "Can you imagine trying to raise a fam-



President Bill Young stands with President Bill Burrus.

ily and sending kids to college on that salary?"

"The second criterion is that the employer pay 'some sort of' health benefits," Young said. "It doesn't matter if the employee pays 99 percent of the costs, if the employer pays anything, it means it's a 'good job'."

The third criterion was also in the "some sort of" category. "If there's any kind of employer-sponsored annuity plan at all, it's a 'good job' to have."

Only 23 percent of American jobs met even these three "miserable criteria," the NALC leader said.

The significance for postal workers, he said, is that the APWU and the NALC have to negotiate

against a "standard of comparability."

"We cannot withstand this assault unless we join hands, today, this minute, and return this country to working men and women."

Young said that it can be done this fall. "We are determined to put Barack Obama in the White House," he said. "We need to work together."

"Whatever divided us in the past doesn't mean diddly-squat," Young said of NALC-APWU history. "We will work together and we will succeed."

Young's appearance came a few weeks after President William Burrus had accepted an invitation to speak at the NALC's national convention in Boston. Burrus described his reception from Letter Carrier union members on July 24 as extremely warm, saying that "the NALC's welcome to me was a welcome to APWU members."

In his State of the Union message shortly after the NALC president spoke to the APWU assembly, Burrus offered a note of caution. "That the joint appearances not be misread, they are not a sign that merger is near," he said.

"We have not discussed merger. We have not discussed the thought of merger," Burrus said. "What we have done is taken the first step in a long journey that could lead to an improved relationship."



Challenges! Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Looking Forward to a Busy Week

The APWU 19th Biennial National Convention got off to a good start Aug. 18: Delegates adopted rules to guide the convention, heard reports on union finances, and began consideration of Labor-Management resolutions.

Aug. 19 will culminate in COPA Night – a celebration of political fund-raising and a chance to raise a ruckus, with an “APWU Olympics” theme. Lace up your sneakers and be ready to dunk, sprint, box, and maybe even joust.

COPA fund-raising will be a recurring theme, with two raffle drawings each day, one for contributors in the hall, and one for COPA givers who are unable to be in attendance. Delegates can improve their odds by making donations during the convention.

On Aug. 20, Sen. Barack Obama is scheduled to speak to the assembly live via satellite. T-shirts expressing support for his candidacy are for sale at the COPA booth in the Exhibit Area. Delegates are urged to wear the Obama attire on the day of his address.

Deliberations will be delayed on the morning of Aug. 21 by a protest rally. Seventeen buses will deliver delegates



Delegates, above, size up the selection of T-shirts to be worn at Thursday's rally.

to three Las Vegas retail stores that offensively market their “pack-and-ship” operation as *Goin' Postal*.

“We’re outraged that the Postal Service has joined forces with this company,” said President William Burrus, referring to its partnership in the USPS “Approved Shipper Program.” Demonstrators will be wearing blue T-shirts mocking the USPS partner’s corporate logo and insisting that the phrase is anything but a joke.

A 25-minute video of convention highlights is being broadcast each day in hotel rooms: Bally’s (Channel 21), Paris (Ch. 32), and Flamingo (Ch. 19), as well as online (www.apwu.org).



APWU members model the “Obama attire” that delegates are encouraged to wear on Wednesday. These shirts are available at the COPA Booth in Exhibit Hall. The contribution of \$10 will benefit the union’s political action fund.

COLA Increase – \$1,477 – Will Be Highest in History

Thanks to a cost-of-living adjustment that will be the highest in APWU-bargaining history, postal workers represented by the union will be receiving an annual raise of \$1,477 at the end of the month.

The increase is the result of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rise during the six months of the most recent Cost-of-Living measuring period under the 2006-2010 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

“This is not only the largest COLA increase under the current contract,” said President William Burrus, “but the largest such raise we’ve ever achieved.”

The COLA will be effective Aug. 30, and will be reflected in Sept. 19 paychecks. The adjustment will amount to a 71-cent per hour increase, or \$56.80 per pay period.

The CPI for July, the last month in the measuring period, was released Aug. 14, and represents the completion of the fourth six-month COLA period in the 2006 National Agreement.

“Cost-of-living adjustments make important contributions to our members’ wages,” Burrus said. “APWU members who began 2008 at Level 5 Step O will realize an increase of nearly \$3,200 per year as a result of the February upgrade and the March and August COLAs.”

There will be four more COLA adjustments under the latest contract. Employees received a \$686 raise on Sept. 1, 2007, and a \$479 raise on March 15.

With the latest adjustment, the COLA increases in the current contract will total \$2,642.

State of the Union Address

'The Very Existence of Our Jobs Is at Stake'

In the face of difficult challenges, APWU President William Burrus told delegates to the union's convention, "We are armed with two invaluable weapons: The members of the American Postal Workers Union and the millions of Americans who will fight for the national treasure that is the United States Postal Service."

"In past conventions, we focused our attention on improving conditions for the employees we represent," Burrus said in his State of the Union address in Las Vegas. "This year, it is not the quality of our jobs that is at stake, but their very existence. In 2008, the future of the Postal Service hangs in the balance."

The APWU continues to represent the workforce well, he said. "The 2006 contract negotiations led to the most comprehensive improvements in our history, and the membership ratified the agreement at the highest rate ever," the union president said.

"The grievance backlog is down. The legislative success and community outreach have been unparalleled. Our finances are in the best shape in the history of the union, and even though our bargaining unit has declined substantially, the membership percentage has reached new heights."



William Burrus

But the nation's severe economic difficulties and the resultant drop in mail volume are taking their toll. "The economy is in trouble, and the threat to the future of the Postal Service and to our jobs is real."

The Challenge to Preserve

In Fiscal Year 2008, the USPS is expected to suffer a deficit of approximately \$1.5 billion, Burrus said, adding that current law prohibits management from recovering losses by raising rates beyond that of the pace of inflation. "This has serious implications not only for our 2010 contract negotiations, but for the future of the Postal Service: No enterprise can continue to exist while bleeding cash in this amount."

Making matters worse, he said, postal

reform legislation that was enacted in late 2006 requires Congress to review the foundation of the Postal Service, including universal service, the mailbox monopoly, six-day delivery, and the postal network.

Burrus pointed out how these reviews are being conducted while postal management continues the disastrous policies of granting excessive workshare discounts and pursues a misguided policy of contracting out postal work.

"Together, we must wage a campaign to preserve mail service for all America's citizens," Burrus said. "It will have to be a political campaign, with members reaching out to their communities and their elected officials. We will need every union activist to join in this battle."

"Considering the threats that we face, can there be any doubt that winning support on Capitol Hill for the future of the Postal Service is as important as filing a grievance protesting discipline or the improper assignment of overtime?"

"And is there any confusion," he said, about the importance of gaining more co-sponsors for the Mail Network Protection Act, which would force the Postal Service to bargain with the union before it engages in significant subcontracting?"

A Chance for Real Change

The challenges of tomorrow, Burrus said, are upon us now. "In November, the citizens of our country will have the opportunity to reverse the slide of workers into economic uncertainty. The Bush administration has eroded every aspect of our existence." The downward spiral can be stopped, Burrus said, by electing "a friend of ordinary people, a friend of labor. ... We can elect the Democratic Party nominee, Barack Obama."

Delegates will have the opportunity to endorse Sen. Obama, following a live speech to the convention via satellite.

VER Eligible? 'Make USPS Pay'

The Postal Service offer of Voluntary Early Retirements is a response to the significant decline in mail volume and the resultant cash-flow emergency, President Burrus told delegates. The opportunity to retire early may be tempting, he added, but it is not being offered for the employee's benefit.

"Our advice is: *Don't Go*. ... Early-outs are not new, having been offered in many industries," he said. "But they are called 'buyouts,' and employees have been offered healthy cash incentives. Every APWU-represented employee who leaves early will save the USPS hundreds of thousands of dollars."

"And with the economy nearing a recession," he noted, "the opportunity to replace postal employment with another job after retirement has diminished. The APWU demands that employees eligible for the early-out be offered a cash incentive to cushion the shock."

"Postal management refuses to discuss our proposal," Burrus said, "so I have asked eligible employees to reject early retirement. *Make them pay*."

Pre-Convention Activities Set the Stage



Many of the 3,200 delegates to the national convention arrived in Las Vegas a few days early. In photo top left, Idwu Balogun, National Representative-at-Large, makes a point at the Bulk Mail Center Conference on Friday. Clerk Division delegates, above, and Motor Vehicle delegates, left, met over the weekend that led up to the start of the convention, as did their brothers and sisters in the Maintenance and Support Services crafts.

Women's Organizing Campaign Expands Rolls as It Rolls Along



In a special "APWU RV," the union's Women's Organizing Campaign rolled into Las Vegas Aug. 13 after a two-week tour of California, from bottom to almost the top, and then back south again. "We're a little road-weary, but we made all our scheduled stops at Postal Service facilities large and small, and everywhere in between," said Northeast Regional Coordinator Liz Powell, the campaign's chairperson. "All in all, it was a successful 'drive' through the state as we signed up dozens of new members along the way, including several members-at-large."



A Memorial Moment

Convention delegates held a moment of silence on Monday to remember APWU members who had passed away since the 2006 convention, including union stalwart Abner "Bill" Delaney, who died Aug. 16 in Las Vegas.

Mr. Delaney was Maintenance Craft Director for the Pasadena (CA) Area Local and a national staffing advocate. He had been in the APWU for nearly 30 years.

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Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Geneva Greenlee of the Indiana APWU, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Monday, Aug. 18, is as follows:

The 19th Biennial Convention's 2,680 delegates represent 382 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 85 national officers and five Retirees Department delegates.