

Nationwide Solidarity Display Set for Oct. 26

Day of Picketing to Expose Ill-Advised Consolidation Plans

In accordance with a resolution adopted by delegates to the union's 18th Biennial Convention, the APWU National Executive Board has selected Oct. 26 for a nationwide day of picketing to protest ill-advised postal consolidations.

The coordinated informational picketing is intended to spotlight the potentially damaging effects of the USPS consolidation plan, and to expose how Postal Service policy panders to major mailers. The Oct. 26 date was selected to give local unions the opportunity to seek support from elected officials and candidates prior to Election Day, Nov. 7.

"I urge locals and state organizations to participate in the nationwide day of picketing," said APWU President William Burrus, "and I urge them to take our message to the public: This plan will delay mail to local communities, and it is being forced on the American people without their input.

"We intend to change that," Burrus said. "We will engage the public in a dialogue about their expectations and experience with postal service. These informational pickets are an opportunity to express our concerns."

The union president also urged locals to inform elected officials about the USPS consolidation plan and the negative effect it will have on service to their constituents. In a Sept.

12 letter to every member of Congress, Burrus wrote, "The Postal Service has failed to consider the concerns of the American people, denied them the information necessary to determine if the revised network will meet their needs, and excluded them from having real input in the decision-making process."

Input from individuals and small businesses is especially important in view of the fact that special interests in the mailing industry have lobbied for a reduction in the mail processing network in order to improve their own bottom line.

"We believe that the changes would be at the expense of service to small businesses and individual customers," he wrote.

The nationwide day of picketing will present an opportunity for union activists to encourage their co-workers to vote, Burrus noted. "This is a crucial election, and we will support candidates who support postal workers."

The national union is mailing information to local and state presidents to assist them in their efforts to organize the pickets and publicize the union's message. Posters, flyers, and other material can be ordered online, at www.kellydigital.com/q-store/store/default.asp?CompanyID=3689. (Follow the instructions for creating an APWU Web store "login.")

The day of picketing will also present an opportunity for union activists to urge co-workers to vote on Nov. 7.

National Contract Negotiations Update

Management representatives painted a bleak picture of USPS finances during contract talks held Oct. 3, and, to no one's surprise, offered the conclusion that "cost containment is the only answer."

In a presentation clearly intended to convey that labor costs must be restricted, USPS officials said that they are the "key drivers of costs," accounting for "80 percent of the Postal Service's expenses."

Union negotiators challenged the USPS analysis, requesting figures showing what portion of these expenses APWU-represented employees are responsible for, and raising pointed questions about productivity improvements, excessive postage discounts, and mail volume. Management was unable to provide information that responded to these ques-

tions, and its presentation at the latest bargaining session did not include any contract proposals.

Following the two-hour discussion of postal finances, union officers asked questions about management's previously submitted non-economic proposals, which addressed issues such as work assignments and management's rights. The APWU has introduced topics such as protecting craft work, safety and health concerns, travel issues, and matters affecting deaf and hard-of-hearing employees.

Contract talks between the USPS and the APWU began Aug. 29. In addition to the most recent session, there were seven sessions in September. There are five more rounds of bargaining scheduled this month, with the next session set for Oct. 18.