

APWU Members Ratify One-Year Contract Extension

APWU members ratified a one-year extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement by a vote of 69,763 to 9,201, in balloting that ended Aug 5. The National Agreement is now set to expire on Nov. 20, 2006.

“The members have spoken, and I am gratified by their decision,” said APWU President William Burrus. “I believe union members considered the possibilities inherent in full-scale negotiations and compared that with the certainty of achieving important objectives through a one-year extension.”

The tentative agreement provides for a 1.6 percent across-the-board wage increase effective March 18, 2006, and two cost-of-living adjustments, one in March 2006, and one in September 2006. (A cost-of-living adjustment is set for September 2005 under the terms of the previous contract.)

The extension upgrades 14 positions; leaves the employee share of contributions to health benefits costs unchanged, and extends no-layoff protection. It also provides improvements in working conditions and employee rights, and includes modifications that will enable union representatives to enforce the contract more effectively.

“In our discussions with management, the amount of the wage increase and the number of positions to be upgraded were the most contentious issues,” Burrus said. “We sought larger increases and upgrades of many more positions. But the extension represents steady advancement toward our goal of improving the pay and benefits of our members.”

The contract-extension referendum process began immediately after tentative agreement was reached with the USPS: In accordance with Article 13.9.C of the APWU Constitution, members of the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee approved the agreement before it was mailed to union members for ratification, and the 13-member panel appointed a subcommittee of five people to supervise the referendum.

More than 220,000 ballots were mailed to union members covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement on July 18-20. The vote count took place Aug. 5, immediately after an independent balloting association picked up the envelopes containing the votes from the post office box. Rank and File Committee members monitored the collection of the ballots and the count.

Yolanda Elder, chairperson of the Rank and File Committee, announced the results at approximately 10:45 p.m. Eastern Time, as soon as the counting of ballots was complete.

Results showing the voting by individual locals will be posted on the union’s Web site, www.apwu.org. The local-by-local count is expected to take several weeks.

“Our work is not finished,” Burrus said. “We will continue our fight for the rights and dignity of postal workers. Our members deserve more, and we will not rest until they get it.”

Timeline of the 2000-2006 Agreement

Dec. 18, 2001: Arbitrator Stephen B. Goldberg rules on the 2000-2003 contract. The agreement is retroactive to Nov. 21, 2000, and is set to expire Nov. 20, 2003.

Dec. 19, 2002: Members approve extending 2000-2003 agreement by two years. The expiration date moves to Nov. 20, 2005.

March 2005: USPS management initiates discussions about a possible contract extension.

April 11, 2005: President Burrus discusses a possible contract extension with local and state presidents meeting in Virginia Beach.

June 20, 2005: Speaking at the APWU National Presidents’ Conference in New Orleans, President Burrus announces that the union and management have reached “an agreement on a framework” for a one-year extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

June 22, 2005: Appointed months earlier in anticipation of contract talks set to begin in August, the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee meets for the first time and is briefed about the framework of a possible contract extension.

June 28, 2005: Burrus announces that the union and the USPS have reached a tentative agreement on a one-year extension. The APWU National Executive Board votes unanimously to endorse the tentative agreement.

July 7, 2005: The Rank and File committee votes to approve the tentative APWU-USPS agreement, clearing the way for a ratification vote by union members.

July 18-20, 2005: Ballots, due back Aug. 5, are mailed to APWU members.

Aug. 5, 2005: Votes are counted and the results are announced: 69,763 in favor; 9,201 against.