

## Union Wraps Up Opening Round In Contract Arbitration

On April 5 and 6 the APWU completed the opening round of its case before the arbitration panel that will decide the terms of a new contract, with testimony supporting the union's economic package and proposals to eliminate multiple tiers within the workforce.

The Postal Service began presenting its case the next day. Following the conclusion of management's case, each side will present rebuttal testimony. Before resting its case, the APWU reviewed the testimony and evidence presented.

### Day 1: 'We Deserve to Be Justly Compensated'

President Mark Dimondstein gave an impassioned presentation, telling the arbitrators, "Postal workers earn the right to be justly compensated for our service and hard work... The economic lot of workers should be constantly improving, and those improvements should be passed on from generation to generation. We earn the right to be provided a safe workplace, free of harassment and discrimination, and, after concluding our careers, to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement."

### Days 2 and 3: Workers Testify

Nineteen career Clerk, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Service Craft employees testified about their jobs. Several themes emerged:

- Postal employees enjoy a tremendous degree of trust from the public.
- They work independently, in many cases with minimal supervision.
- Experience is crucial. It enables postal workers to make important decisions that impact service and protect postal revenue.
- Postal work is hard work.
- Employees take great pride in doing their jobs well and are dedicated to serving the people of the country.

Craft Directors Clint Burelson (Clerk), Steve Raymer (Maintenance) and Michael O. Foster (MVS) introduced the workers and gave context to their testimony.

### Day 4: The Facts Don't Lie

Union economist Kathryn Kobe reviewed a series of graphs and charts illustrating the current state of the workforce and supporting APWU proposals for wage increases, retaining cost-of-living allowances (COLAs), and other monetary matters. Other witnesses offered supporting testimony.

### Day 5: Compared to What?

Union experts demonstrated that APWU members' wages are comparable to the wages of employees in large, unionized private-sector workforces. Jennifer Kelly, of the United Auto Workers union, dissected the detrimental effects multiple pay and benefit structures have had on employee morale in the auto industry and discussed significant strides the UAW made in eliminating them in their recent contract.



On opening day, union members wore stickers in a show of solidarity. Shown here: Central Florida Area Local.

### Day 6: Hardships and Indignities

Nine Postal Support Employees (PSEs) from all crafts offered emotional testimony about the devastating effect low wages have on every aspect of their lives.

### Day 7: Survey Says!

Dr. Anna Haley-Lock and Melody Waring, of the University of Wisconsin, reviewed the results of a survey of PSEs and career employees in the first two steps of the pay scale. The survey revealed a systematic pattern of economic hardship and reliance on public benefits to make ends meet, they reported. These conditions are reminiscent of the situation in the late 1960s – conditions that precipitated the Great Postal Strike of 1970, the union pointed out.

### Day 8: Uniforms, Civil Rights and Bad Faith

Maintenance Craft Assistant Director Idowu Balogun testified about the need to increase uniform and work-clothes allowances.

Retirees Department Director Judy Beard elaborated on the important role postal employment has played in advancing civil rights and in realizing "equal pay for

*(Continued)*

## *Stand Up for Safe Jobs!*

# Workers Memorial Day is April 28

The labor movement will observe Workers Memorial Day on Thursday, April 28, to commemorate those who have been killed or injured on the job and to revitalize the fight for workplace safety. The event coincides with the anniversary of the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), which promises every worker the right to safe working conditions.

Each year, thousands of workers die and millions more are injured or sickened from dangerous conditions on the job. Many employers routinely cut corners and violate the law. Workers who report hazards and injuries are often fired or disciplined.

Unfortunately, the Postal Service is no exception. In fiscal year 2015, 18 postal workers lost their lives on the job and 42,000 were injured.

Last year, the APWU launched the *Stand Up for Safe Jobs* campaign, encouraging workers to be aware of the many dangers on the job, and to get actively involved with their co-workers to fight for safe working conditions. The need is clear:

- Over a 10-month period, four postal workers employed at Michigan's Metroplex Processing and Distribution Center died. They fell ill at work, were taken away by Emergency Services, and later passed away. The Office of Inspector General concluded that a methane detection system at the facility had not been functioning properly, but did not correlate it to the deaths. APWU's 480-481 Area Local is demanding an investigation.
- In New Jersey, an APWU member was fatally struck by a van as she walked through the employee parking lot to the Dominick V. Daniels Processing



and Distribution Center on March 23. The local had requested speed bumps, stop signs and posted speed limits prior to the accident, but the requests were ignored. The New York Metro Area Local is demanding action and accountability.

- On Aug. 28, a three-alarm fire was reported at the BMC in North Oak Cliff, near Dallas, TX. All 115 workers were evacuated from the building safely, but one firefighter was taken to the hospital.
- The air conditioning unit at the Bronx General Post Office was tainted with the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease last summer, but management failed to notify employees for several days. Fortunately, no workers were sickened.

"Workers Memorial Day is a great time to renew the fight for safety at work. Management won't do it for us. We must do it for ourselves," Dimondstein said.

*For info about events in your area, visit [actionnetwork.org/event\\_campaigns/workers-memorial-day-2016](http://actionnetwork.org/event_campaigns/workers-memorial-day-2016).*

## Union Wraps Up Opening Round in Arbitration

*(Continued)*

equal work." Career employment at the USPS has given women and minorities an opportunity to have dignified and meaningful careers that enable them to support their families, she testified.

Clerk Craft Director Burelson, Assistant Director Lamont Brooks, and Maintenance Craft Director Raymer testified that after ratification of the 2010 contract, the USPS failed to honor its commitment to return a specific number of career jobs to each craft. (MVS Craft Director Michael O. Foster previously testified on the same issue.)

### **USPS Proposals: Insulting and Outrageous**

The arbitration panel should reject USPS attempts to use the 2010 contract as a base to demand additional

concessions, the APWU asserted. That concessionary contract should be considered a temporary solution to temporary problems caused by the Postal Service's congressionally-manufactured financial crisis and the 2008 economic meltdown.

"Not surprisingly, as management proceeds with their case, they are pleading poverty and trying to devalue the work APWU members perform. This is an attempt to justify their call for more concessions from the workers. The Postal Service's demands, including a new, lower-tier career workforce, elimination of cost-of-living allowances, and weakening the no-layoff clause are insulting and outrageous.

"The arbitration panel should reject the Postal Service's demands and grant the APWU's proposals," Dimondstein said.