

The Philadelphia POSTAL WORKER

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1st Quarter 2021

A Welcome Change, the Fight Continues



Nick Casselli,
President

On January 20, 2021 Joe Biden will be sworn in as our 46th President of the United States. The APWU elected leadership and a large majority of our members support and applaud the new Biden/

Harris team. Joe Biden was endorsed by the APWU National Executive Board, and also by the Philadelphia Area Local 89 Executive Board.

We will now have a president who supports the public Post Office, a president who supports union and collective bargaining rights; a president who will not flame racial and religious bigotry; a president that understands and respects the work and dedication that postal workers perform every day, and how important we are to the American public, and does not consider us a joke; who does not support the privatization of the United States Postal Service.

Every APWU member should be extremely proud of our role in securing the most precious democratic right to vote. The American people

counted on the Postal Service to process and deliver over 65 million ballots. We worked through the pandemic; we performed our duties when our president was bashing the work we performed every day. We worked long hours through all roadblocks and obstacles that got in our way to ensure the timely delivery and processing of ballots. Since Election Day we have stood with the majority of this country who expect and insist that every vote, including all mail ballots be counted and the results final.

Our next obstacle, roadblock, is Louis DeJoy who is still the Postmaster General and his promises to implement policies that will slow

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You Are the Union



Nancy Rolling,
Vice President

Greeting sisters and brothers! In my opinion, and through management's actions from the local level all the way to the top tier of USPS management, it would appear the USPS is moving towards

removing the service out of United States Postal Service. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy implemented a new business model that is doing nothing more than causing negative impacts on the Postal Service.

Right in front of our very eyes we are watching what we know is a great service to the American people being diminished. He is eroding the confidence of the customers we have serviced for many years. As postal workers we have always been trained and pushed to get all the First Class mail out to our customers. You have to ask yourself why this is no longer a priority.

How do we protect what we have? We get involved! So many times I hear folks say that stewards and officers are the union. No brothers and sisters, YOU are the UNION! Stewards and officers are those that stepped up to protect our rights and fight for postal workers on a day to day basis on the workroom floor. They are on the front line to enforce our contract and look

out for worker safety. However, to win the war being waged on the Postal Service right now, from within our leadership ranks at the highest level, will take every single member of all the postal unions to stand up and fight this fight! We must all do our part by getting involved in contacting our elected officials, reaching out to those in the public who support and share in our fight and working together as a unified force to protect and save the public Postal Service. That means when there is a demonstration we must all make the time to show up and participate; to show we are a united force!

Not Your Friend

Management is not your friend and you have to realize that. Do you really think that management cares if you get hurt on the job or working

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Send all communication to the Editor at the above address or via e-mail to Editor@phillyapwu.com.

Articles must be submitted by the second Thursday of the month. They must be typed. Letters must be signed. Name withheld upon request.

Visit our web site at
<https://phillyapwu.org>

Letter to the Editor

Nick,

I hope you are well and being safe during these difficult and crazy times.

I saw your press coverage and wanted to say good job getting our message out.

I cannot believe the reports I have received about the massive amount of delayed mail all around the country...No help and no overtime!!!

All of these delays are the result of Trump's hate for the USPS as he believes the USPS gave Amazon-Bezos a break on postage and service. What it did was give us much needed work at a critical time of declining first class mail.

And his crony PMG DeJoy running the USPS into the ground and will make sure it is just about destroyed before they attempt to privatize it again!!

As I mentioned I have been seeing these kinds of news reports in CT and the NE Region as well and no response or input from the APWU or any of the postal unions. We need to tell our story as well. Postal management never likes publicity so hopefully with a little push from the Unions we can get back to timely processing and delivering our products to our loyal customers.

So Nick thanks again for getting our message out to our customers. Good luck in fighting for more jobs and overtime!!

Stay strong my friend and keep up the good job representing our members and the APWU!

Happy 2021!!

John H. Dirzius
Retired NE Regional Coordinator

General Membership Meetings

**Third Thursday of every month
except July, August
and December**

**7:30 p.m.
864 Main Street
Darby, PA 19023**

Light Refreshments Will be Served

Covid-19 and Staffing Relief



Atiyah Ivey,
*Director of
Industrial
Relations*

On December 27, 2020, the President signed into law another sweeping COVID relief bill, which included vital funding for the Postal Service. This bill will convert the \$10 billion borrowing

authority loan in the March 2020 CARES Act into direct emergency relief to the USPS without requiring repayment.

Additional Staffing

The American Postal Workers Union and the Postal Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 24, 2020, to help address the chronic understaffing at mail processing facilities throughout much of the country.

The terms of the new agreement state, over 5,500 new career positions will be created at 192 installations. The number of career positions will vary by installation based on management's determination. 5,524 PSEs will be converted to career status as soon as possible, but no later than March 13, 2021.

Through the transition to the creation of the new career positions and PSE conversions, combined with the severe backlog of mail and packages, the APWU has agreed to extend the period where management can retain "peak season" PSEs above the PSE cap.

Parcel Sorting Machine Jurisdiction

On December 1, 2020, Arbitrator Joseph M. Sharnoff's decision confirmed Clerk Craft jurisdiction over operation of the Small Parcel Sorting System (SPSS) machine. The Award rejected arguments made by the Mail Handlers Union which claimed that Mail Handlers should be assigned all the work on the machines.

The Postal Service had issued a decision in 2015 designating the Clerk Craft as the primary craft for performing the work of "separating packages & facing/feeding packages" at the induction stations on SPSS machines. Clerks also rotate to sweeping duties after performing induction station work.

Mail Handlers are assigned jurisdiction over retrieving and dumping packages and transporting full containers to a staging area. When sweeping assignments are not needed to provide rotational relief for Clerks operating the machines, sweeping is assigned to Mail Handlers.

A More Labor-Friendly NLRB Under Biden

One big step a Biden administration could take is reshaping the National Labor Relations Board to the benefit of workers rather than

employers.

The five-member NLRB referees disputes between unions and corporations, and the GOP majority Trump installed has routinely ruled in favor of the latter. They have made it harder for certain workers to join unions and bargain collectively in the workplace, from fast-food restaurants to university campuses.

One of the first steps the Trump-shaped NLRB took was to undo worker-friendly reforms made during the Obama administration, such as streamlining union elections so that employers have less time to interfere. The GOP-led board drew plaudits from employer groups and lawsuits from unions.

Board members serve five-year terms and must be approved by the Senate; there is currently one vacancy, leaving a 3-1 Republican majority. A President Biden could flip the board to Democratic control within his first term, and his appointees could reverse the corporate-friendly precedents of the Trump era. They could also go back further if they chose to. Unions would have much less to fear in taking their quarrels with employers before the board.

Still, worker-friendly boards under previous Democratic presidents have done little to stop the shrinking footprint of organized labor. The union membership rate in the U.S. has fallen steadily for decades; now a mere 1 in 10 workers belongs to a labor union, the lowest share since the Labor Department started tracking it in 1983. And besides, a subsequent Republican-led board can easily undo the rulings that help more workers unionize.

A Shot at Sweeping Labor Law Reform

A Biden presidency could boost unions in a potentially historic way since Democrats took control of the Senate. The Democratic-controlled House has already passed a bill known as the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, or PRO Act. If enacted, it would mark the biggest overhaul of labor law since the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which paved the way for "right to work" laws and restricted the ability of workers to strike and boycott.

Among other measures, the PRO Act would ban right-to-work laws that are now on the books in a majority of states; reinvigorate the power to strike and boycott; and increase penalties on employers for union-busting. Business groups that oppose unions fear the signifi-

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Dodge Depression During The Pandemic

Article
reprinted
from the
*National
APWU
Healthcare
web site*

There's no doubt about it: Staying at home, worrying about jobs and finances, is a recipe for depression during the coronavirus pandemic. But one expert offers some tips on how to maintain good

mental health during this difficult time. "The current situation has many of us feeling helpless, fearful and adrift," said Dr. Donna Anthony, chief medical officer at Gracie Square Hospital in New York City. "In order to get through this crisis, it is important to acknowledge these feelings and proactively manage stress, maintain your health, and find ways to cope when things seem darkest. We don't know when our lives will return to a semblance of normality, but in the meantime, there are steps we can take to make ourselves feel better," Anthony said in a hospital news release.

People who already struggled with depression and anxiety may find it even more difficult now, and even those who haven't faced those mental health challenges may feel anxious, afraid and lonely.

Take a step back and examine your feelings, Anthony suggested. Be non-judgmental and compassionate toward yourself. Distract yourself from negative thoughts. If you're bored, do something. If you're lonely or frightened, call a friend.

Your body is better able to fight stress if you take care of it. Eat healthy, well-balanced meals and get enough rest and sleep. Don't try to relieve stress by self-medicating with drugs, alcohol or compulsive behaviors, such as eating, Anthony advised.

Maintaining daily routines can help you feel in control of your life, she added. Wake up at the same time each day, shower, dress and get some exercise by walking around your home if you can't go outside. It's especially important to structure your day if you're off from work. If you're working from home, be sure to take breaks. Work on hobbies and other interests, seek out social support, and relax through meditation, breathing, massage, listening to or making music, singing and creating art.

News can be especially stressful, so set limits on how much you consume, and try to get it from reputable sources, Anthony said.

Stress-Busting Tips From Experts

Whether it's taking a nature walk or some deep breaths, activity helps. Nobody is immune from the negative health effects of stress. The good news is that staying active is a natural and effective way to reduce stress, and avoid related issues like weight fluctuations, nausea and feeling tired, experts says. "Stress can have many negative effects on the body, such as fatigue, headaches, upset stomach, insomnia, weight loss or gain, muscle tension,

and elevated heart rate and blood pressure. You need to find an activity that helps reduce your stress," Jane Roy, an associate professor of human studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Education, said in a university news release.

"A single bout of aerobic exercise appears to affect a particular neurotransmitter that has an antidepressant-like effect in the brain, and the increase in blood flow to the working muscles causes a decrease in muscle tension," she explained.

Roy, who plays tennis for relaxation, added that it's also a great distraction because she is focused on the game and not the stressors in her daily life. "When playing, I have to focus on things like the ball, strategy, score and skill, and not on whatever is causing me to feel stressed," she said. "I also play with friends, so we chat and laugh a lot on changeovers."

Not a tennis buff? Roy and two colleagues — Larrell Wilkinson, an assistant professor, and Retta Evans, an associate professor — provided some alternative suggestions for easing day-to-day stress:

- **Get out.** Going outside for a change of scenery,

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You Are the Union

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on a machine by yourself? Do you think they care if you are being over-worked because they have caused short staffing by reverting so many jobs?

Everything the union has fought for establishes better wages and working conditions for the employees they represent. Overall, we need to be proactive and ensure that our rights are protected as employees of the Postal Service, and we must understand how important it is to work under an organized union that provides better benefits, safer working conditions and greater job security.

In closing I would like to wish each of our members and their families a very Happy, Healthy New Year and a blessed 2021. I understand we live in a different world right now, but we still have a lot to be thankful for. I am looking forward to this New Year and am hopeful it will serve us all better and that we will succeed in our endeavors. □

Covid-19 and Staffing Relief

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cant changes the law would bring about. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) warned GOP supporters that a Democratic takeover of the Senate would lead to the repeal of Taft-Hartley.

The law would help tilt the scales back toward workers when it comes to collective bargaining. Research shows that corporate America has ramped up its resistance to unions over the years, often hiring anti-union consultants to dissuade workers from organizing. The punishments for breaking the law are very weak.

There needs to be a drastic change in the way policy has been implemented by the government. The PRO Act would go a very long way to restoring those rights.

The last time Democrats held all the levers of power, including a Senate supermajority, they failed to pass landmark labor law reform with the Employee Free Choice Act in 2009 and 2010, in large part due to a lack of support among moderate Democrats. Resistance from centrists

within the party could easily doom major labor legislation again.

The PRO Act has to get passed. Even though Democrats won the White House and Senate and push the legislation through, there still seems like major road blocks for unions because of the way Trump has shaped the judiciary. The Trump judicial branch will do everything in their power to thwart the rights of workers.

The conservative Supreme Court of recent years has posed a serious threat to unions. The 5-4 decision handed down in *Janus v. AFSCME* in 2018 effectively made the entire U.S. public sector "right to work," allowing employees to stop paying fees to unions that still must bargain on their behalf. The replacement of the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg with Justice Amy Coney Barrett cements a 6-3 conservative majority, making further rulings against unions and workers highly likely for years to come. □

Dodge Depression During The Pandemic

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and taking just a 10- to 15-minute walk can help. "Research suggests that a natural environment is a de-stresser," Roy noted.

"Anything outdoors, weather permitting, is a great idea because it gets you out of your regular environment. In the event of bad weather, try yoga or basic stretching exercises."

· **Take a deep breath.** Stress or nerves may cause people to take shallow breaths or even hold their breath. Simple breathing exercises, like taking slow, deep breaths can help people relax and de-stress.

· **Find a hobby.** Having fun and doing something you enjoy is a great way to feel better and relax. "Plan fun activities and enjoy hobbies or engage in interests outside of the job environment," Wilkinson advised in the news release.

· **Eat a healthy diet.** Eating more healthy foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, may boost your immune system. "A poor diet puts the body in a state of physical stress and weakens the immune system," Wilkinson explained. "As a result, a person can be more likely to get infections."

· **Be positive.** Making it a point to look on the bright side can make a big difference when it comes to stress. "A person with a negative attitude will often report more stress than would someone with a positive attitude," Wilkinson said.

· **Stay connected.** When coping with life's twists and turns, it's important to rely on friends for support. "Sometimes having little or no social

support will increase the difficulty of dealing with an issue," Wilkinson noted.

· **Stretch.** "Stress builds up over time and can center in the neck, back and spine," Evans said in the release. "Stress can cause headaches and lower the immune response. Both exercise and stretching help to relieve stress."

· **Take a break.** For 10 minutes every day, relax and try to shut out the world. "Close your eyes and breathe deeply; this can trigger the relaxation response," Evans suggested. □

Fight Continues

(continued from page 1)

down the mail, and drive away the American public now that elections are over, our fight continues. The Postal Service must increase services and create newer options to the American public. Postal reform legislation is needed to keep our Postal Service, and the APWU functioning, and ensure a vibrant public Postal Service for years to come.

In closing I want to Wish everyone a Happy, Healthy, Safe, Prosperous, and Blessed 2021. As the fight continues we will stand together, along with the other postal unions, our political leaders locally and in Washington, and with the people of this country who support and trust the public United States Postal Service. □

Maintenance Craft News

(This article first appeared in the July/August 2020 issue of the American Postal Worker magazine)

**Idowu
Balogun,
National,
Maint. Craft
Director**

Promotion Pending Qualification Timeline Extended Due to NCED Closure

On March 18, the USPS closed the National Center for Employee Development (NCED) in Norman, Oklahoma due to COVID-19 concerns. With hundreds of employees pending qualification, the parties entered into the following agreement:

- Due to the Postal Service's COVID-19 travel restrictions and the temporary closing of the NCED in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the time between March 18 and ninety days following the re-opening of NCED, will not count towards the Article 38.5.C.3, one year period for Maintenance Craft employees to be

in a promotion detail assignment pending the satisfactory completion of the necessary training.

- As of the signing of this agreement, NCED is scheduled to start offering classes within thirty (30) days of June 15, 2020. If NCED is not open within thirty (30) days of this date, the parties will revisit this issue to determine if extension is appropriate.

- This agreement does not establish precedent in any future negotiations regarding pending qualifications.

Temporary Resources for COVID-19 Related Cleaning Requirements

In order to accommodate those installations staffed by Maintenance Craft Custodians where supplemental cleaning resources are needed due to COVID-19 related absenteeism, or where postal custodians decline to do COVID-19 related required cleaning, the parties at the HQ level agreed to the following provisions in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

1. Available postal career custodians, either Full-Time Regular, or Part-Time Regular, within the facility shall be utilized up to the maximum hours allowed by Article 8. Postal custodians may volunteer to be utilized outside the facility after completing their regularly assigned duties.

2. Due to COVID-19 related absences, the Postal Service may utilize temporary contract cleaning services where postal custodial staffing within the facility is not sufficient to provide the necessary cleaning as required by MMO-031-20, Influenza and Coronavirus Cleaning Contingency, and/or MS-47, House-keeping Postal Facilities, up to the identified frequencies.

3. When there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case, and the postal custodians assigned to that facility decline to do the necessary cleaning out of personal concern, the Postal Service may utilize contract cleaners to ensure that the facility has been properly cleaned in accordance with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and related Maintenance Management Orders (MMOs). Following such cleaning, postal custodians will be utilized in the facility for normal cleaning (MMO-031-20 and MS-47).

4. This temporary contract cleaning will not impact postal custodial staffing or reduce work hours of Maintenance Craft custodial employees that are available for work at the facility. Available postal custodians will be scheduled in accordance with item 1 above. Postal custodians who decline to do the positive COVID-19 cleaning as stated in item 3 above, will not be considered available for the duration of such cleaning.

5. Where temporary contract cleaning services are used, the following will be provided to the local APWU president: copy of the contract (including the statement of work), duration of the services, name(s) of the contract custodians, and weekly schedule (subject to change based on local need).

6. This temporary agreement does not modify or alter in any way the provisions of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), including the MOU Re: Subcontracting Cleaning Services.

7. Any modifications to this agreement must be between the parties at the USPS Headquarters, and APWU National offices.

These provisions were applicable beginning March 3. This MOU will now expire on July 17, 2020. The parties are discussing the MOU as this issue goes to press, go to apwu.org to see what, if any, extension has been reached.

This agreement does not establish precedent in any future negotiations regarding contract cleaning. □

Understanding Wounded Warrior Leave



**Donna
Alvin,
Treasurer**

The following is from the USPS Wounded Warrior Leave flyer posted on bulletin boards. The Postal Service supports U.S. Military Veterans who have chosen to resume a career with the United States

Postal Service following their military service. The Postal Service allows any employee who meets the eligibility requirements to take a specifically designated type of leave, to undergo medical treatment for a service-related disability.

What is Wounded Warrior Leave? Wounded Warrior Leave is an authorized absence from work to undergo medical treatment for a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more. It is a separate leave category, distinct from sick leave. Who is Eligible to use Wounded Warrior Leave? Eligible employees are those with a service-connected disability rating of 30% or more.

When can an eligible Veteran use Wounded Warrior Leave? Those who seek treatment from their attending physician or other attending practitioner can use Wounded Warrior Leave. Treatment is an in-person visit to a health care provider, and includes the course of action prescribed by a health care provider.

How much leave is available? Military Veterans with a service-connected disability rated at 30% or more are credited with 104 hours per leave year. How do I request Wounded Warrior Leave? When the leave is foreseeable, employees must give their Supervisor a PS 3971 requesting leave in advance. If the leave is not foreseeable, employees must notify their Supervisors as soon as possible of the treatment, expected duration and applicability of Wounded Warrior Leave. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system can be used and the PS 3971 is required upon return to duty.

How do I certify that Wounded Warrior Leave is appropriate? To verify that Wounded Warrior Leave is appropriately used for the treatment of a service-connected disability you must submit to the Supervisor PS Form 5980 (Treatment Verification for Wounded Warrior Leave).

How long do I have to submit verification that Wounded Warrior Leave is appropriate? The employee must provide the PS form 5980 certified by a health care provider the employee used the leave to receive treatment for a covered disability no later than 15 calendar days after you return to work.

What is required before I can use Wounded Warrior Leave? It is the employee's responsibility to notify the Postal Service before requesting leave. Employees must provide documentation to the HR Shared Service Center from the U.S Dept. of Veterans Affairs certifying the requisite level of service-connected disability.

I want to wish everyone a HAPPY SAFE AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR 2021 !!!

VET NEWS

**Excerpt of Article Reprinted from
Michigan Messenger**

by: John P. Smeekens

Veterans receiving government benefits will see a cost-of-living boost in 2021, if Social Security officials approve one for their recipients later this year. Recently, the Senate unanimously passed legislation to link the two federal payouts, sending it to the White House to become law. President Donald Trump is expected to sign the measure when made available.

The bill is not controversial, and routinely passes Congress each year without opposition. But, under current law, lawmakers must approve linking the two increases for veterans to see the pay boost. Efforts to permanently tie the two sets of increases have made little progress in recent years. In a statement, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) and committee ranking member Jon Tester (D-MT) praised the bill's passage as important for veterans and the country. "Our men and women in uniform deserve to have Washington in their corner working tirelessly to ensure they can keep up with the rising costs of housing, utilities, and food when they return to civilian life," Tester said. "Today's passage is a clear sign that we're making good on our promises to those who've served." Earlier this year, bill sponsor Rep. Eliane Luriak (D-VA) called it Congress' "duty" to ensure veterans' benefits keep pace with rising costs. Social Security officials are expected in coming weeks to announce the size of the annual cost-of-living adjustment, if there is one. Last year, the figure was 2.8 percent. Veterans' benefits covered include disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity compensation checks.

If there is a COLA increase to benefits checks, it will go into effect starting this December. □



Why Get Vaccinated?

To Protect Yourself, Your Coworkers, Your Patients, Your Family, and Your Community

- Building defenses against COVID-19 in this facility and in your community is a team effort. And **you** are a key part of that defense.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine adds **one more layer of protection** for you, your coworkers, patients, and family.



Here are ways you can **build people's confidence** in the new COVID-19 vaccines in your facility, your community, and at home:

- ✓ **Get vaccinated** and enroll in the **v-safe** text messaging program to help CDC monitor vaccine safety.
- ✓ **Tell others why** you are getting vaccinated and encourage them to get vaccinated.
- ✓ **Learn how to have conversations** about COVID-19 vaccine with coworkers, family, and friends.



12/09/20

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines