

# The Philadelphia POSTAL WORKER

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## We are all the Union!



*Nick Casselli,  
President*

Your union represents more than 200,000 employees of the United States Postal Service nationwide; this includes Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle and Support Services employees. So many times as

a postal worker, steward and now as President of this Local, I have heard members say, "I pay dues and the union hasn't done anything for me." I would first like to say, YOU ARE THE UNION! I AM THE UNION! WE ARE ALL THE UNION! Just remember, your job security, seniority rights, benefits and wages are all because of your union.

If you have ever taken a day of annual or sick leave, received overtime pay, converted to career from PTF or PSE, received holiday pay or bidden on a job, or looked at your paycheck and received a contractual increase, a cost of living adjustment (COLA) or a monetary grievance award, you can thank your union.

Members who have received a Letter of Warning, 7-Day Suspension, 14-Day Suspension, were emergency placed or issued a Notice of Removal, how many times has the union had the discipline reduced, rescinded or expunged? This is your union at work for you. Every day your stewards police the contract, making sure management isn't stealing your job, assigning work to the wrong craft, or by correcting any violation of our contractual rights, either through the stewards ability to get it corrected by convincing management it is in every bodies best interest to adhere to the contract, or by filing grievances when they won't abide by the contract.

Some of the loudest squawking comes from non-members, who talk negativism against the union, but sure enough, when they receive discipline or are harassed on the work floor they come running to whom? The UNION! Our strength comes from standing together. We are a team. Our union will only be as strong as each of us makes it. People united, will never be defeated. It pays to belong!

### How the grievance procedure works

You believe you have been harmed; be it skipped for overtime, bumped off your preferred duty assignment, issued discipline or whatever else, you bring it to the Union's attention. The preference is you bring it to a steward immediately to give them adequate time to prepare your grievance. The Union has up to 14 days to file a grievance at Step One. The stew-

ard will conduct an investigation, which involves gathering facts, evidence and documentation to prove your claim. I cannot stress enough the importance of having your facts and documentation when you come to the union, and giving a complete and detailed statement about the issue to the steward.

Then, the union files a grievance at Step One. If the union and management cannot come to an agreement on a settlement management denies the grievance, and it gets appealed to Step 2. The union and management meet at Step 2 on the grievance. If the two parties cannot agree to a settlement at this level management sends a letter to the union denying the grievance. The union will review the denial letter and add any additions and/or corrections and then appeal it to Step 3.

At this point no more documentation or evidence is allowed to be submitted by either the union or management in support of their grievance argument. If the grievance progresses to arbitration everything submitted by both parties at Step 1 and 2 would become what is called the moving papers. At Step 3, if the union and management cannot come to an agreement the denial of the grievance is appealed, by the union, to arbitration. The union and management have up until the Arbitrator renders their decision to negotiate a settlement on the issue, however, once an Arbitrator renders their decision it is final and binding.

### History of the APWU

Prior to having any bargaining unit rights postal workers relied on Congress to provide them raises. Yes, it literally used to take an Act of Congress for postal workers to get a raise. Before the Great Postal Strike of 1970 the starting wage for postal workers was \$6,200 annually. Congress provided themselves raises, but not postal workers. After years of having our need for safe working conditions, reasonable work rules, seniority rights and a living wage ignored by Congress, postal employees had had enough.

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*The opinions and views expressed in this paper are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Editor or the Executive Board of this Local.*

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>

# We are all the Union!

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On March 18, 1970, thousands of New York City postal workers walked out in protest. Within days thousands of postal employees across the country joined their brothers and sisters from New York and also walked out. The strike caused havoc and public acknowledgement of how important the Post Office and its employees are to the American public. This ultimately gave the various postal unions the right to bargain for employee's wages and working conditions. We have come a long way from that historic time in our union's fight for the right to live the American Dream.

Today, the USPS delivers over four hundred sixty-five million pieces of mail every day; the amount Fed Ex and UPS delivers over the course of an entire year. Still, management and private contractors attack our way of life, which is why we have to be ever vigilant and protective of our contract. I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Safe and Peaceful Summer. Thanks to all our members for being a part of the APWU. God Bless, and always, in Solidarity!!! ☐

**Enjoy your Summer  
and be Safe!**

## General Membership Meetings

**Are held the 3rd Thursday of every month**

**except July, August and December**

**Meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.**

**864 Main Street  
Darby, PA 19023**

**Light Refreshments Will be Served**

# New Safety Program Rolled Out



**Nancy  
Rolling,  
Vice  
President**

The APWU was informed on October 26, 2017, of the Postal Service's intent to roll out a new program called the Safety Ambassador Program. The Postal Service intends to replace the safety captain program, and any other local safety programs, with this "standardized" and nationally controlled program.

The American Postal Workers Union does not support, agree with, nor endorse this program. As the Postal Service remains one of the most dangerous places to work, of all federal agencies in the country, we must fight for our right to have fair, reasonable, and meaningful safety programs.

Using their latest catch phrase, Employee Engagement, the Postal Service claims that this program "will focus on employee engagement, training, communication, hazard identification/abatement, and accident reduction."

Having a safe workplace is every worker's right and you must fight for that right! However, the Safety Ambassador Program appears to be nothing more than an end-around our currently negotiated joint union-management safety procedures. We have multiple issues with the program including the following: rather than encouraging a safety hazard is reported on PS Form 1767, the service encour-

ages "verbal" reporting of hazards, where there would be no record or tracking of the hazard.

## Best Way to Report a Hazardous Condition

Written records are the basis for proving the hazard exists and was reported. There are two ways to create a written record of a hazardous conditions existence, filing a grievance or filling out a PS Form 1767. Both of these methods put management on notice of a hazardous situation. They also require management to take some kind of action within a specific time period, and give a written response of what measures were taken to correct the unsafe condition.

The ambassador selection process is at the sole discretion of the installation head, manager or postmaster, without any input from the union. Many Locals have elected officers and

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# Don't Get Cancelled by a Five Day Letter



**Larry  
Henderson,  
Director of  
Industrial  
Relations**

As the Director of Industrial Relations one of the things I have observed concerns the issuance of the five day letter by management, and the manner in which employees respond to these five day

letters. I am quite sure that we all can agree to the fact that the Lindbergh Facility is not employee friendly. Management only compounds the problem and has made it even less friendly by the way they issue five day letters.

I believe they do this in the hope the employee does not respond in time, or not in the correct way with all the required information and documentation. As an employee of the postal service, you need to know exactly how to respond to a five day letter.

The standard five day letter states that, if within five days of your receipt of this letter you do not return to duty, or submit a satisfactory explanation for your absence, supported by acceptable evidence, or resign, action will be taken to remove you from the rolls of the postal service.

It also says the five day time limit may be extended if, in your explanation of your absence supported by acceptable evidence, you also explain the circumstances which prevented you from submitting the required state-

ment within the prescribed period of time.

## The Problem

A problem arises when the employee attempts to acquire the required documentation to substantiate their absence, but they go beyond the response time that management requires of the employee.

Once the employee does not respond in the time allotted, management will then automatically accelerate the removal process, regardless of the employee's attendance record. For example, an employee may have an excellent attendance record but management will automatically accelerate the removal process if they fail to respond within five days of the receipt of the five day letter.

Failure to respond to the five day letter takes the discipline out of the normal progressive discipline procedure and accelerates the discipline to a removal. In effect, they are able to

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# The Philadelphia Local in Action



Whether its participating in the “Working People’s Day of Action” or hosting elected officials like State Senator Dwight Evans at a union meeting, the Philadelphia PA Area Local is on the forefront fighting for the issues of postal employees and working class Americans.

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# The Clerk Corner



**Atiyah Ivey,  
Clerk Craft  
Director**

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Atiyah Ivey. I have been a union member since I started at the postal service, 20 years ago, and a union representative for 12 years. I have held the

positions of Chief Steward, Assistant Clerk Craft Director and now, Clerk Craft Director. As Clerk Craft Director I oversee the grievance activity for over 1,100 clerks. I coordinate the stewards' activity and meet with management on a host of bargaining unit issues. In other words, and to put it simply, I enforce the contract.

I have always been the type of steward that will make every effort to work with management instead of against them. As the old adage goes, it's easier to attract bees with honey than with vinegar. But know this, I will never compromise my integrity or my craft; it's just business.

## The Challenges Facing Us

One of the many challenges we face in the postal service today is management's inability to provide adequate staffing so the workforce is capable of doing their job effectively. This includes the city stations, as well as the plant. Staffing is the main reason service to our customers is decreasing, and the stress on the job is increasing. It causes delayed mail and long lines. It also causes many violations of the contract. Such as, supervisors performing bargaining unit work, other crafts performing clerk

work, overtime violations, denied leave and safety violations. Some of the safety violations include situations such as, but are not limited to, one clerk working alone on the automation machines.

## Grievance News

Currently, we have been aggressively reducing the backlog of grievances through Pre Arbitration settlements. We have been successful in getting reverted jobs reinstated, discipline overturned and winning monetary damages including the SRT settlement. As of the writing of this article we have been informed by the National APWU they are working on posting information on the National APWU website "Members Only" section that will provide information on whether you are a part of the settlement, and if so, how much you will be receiving. The Local has not been provided any particulars on when this information will be available, or when members will receive their payout.

In closing, please notify your representative of any discipline received and/or contract violations that occur immediately so we can properly represent you. As a reminder you only have 14 days to file a grievance. In solidarity! ☐

# Don't Get Cancelled by a Five Day Letter

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circumvent the contractual provisions that call for all discipline to be progressive rather than punitive.

## How to Prevent a Removal

This is what you should do when you receive a five day letter. If you are in the process of obtaining the required documentation, and have not obtained it yet; respond to the five day letter saying just that.

How do I respond? It is simple; just write them a letter stating the facts. For example, I, Larry Henderson, have just received a five day letter and am currently in the process of obtaining the requested documentation to substantiate my absence. I will bring in my documentation when I return to work, or if I'm going to be out an extended time I will mail it to you as soon as I receive it from my health care provider.

This is important; send your statement to management via a certified letter and an identical first class letter. In doing this you are responding to management's five day letter

appropriately, and within the allotted time limit. The reason to send it certified is so that you can document it was sent and when. This should prevent management from automatically accelerating the removal process.

## Upon Your Return

When you return to work make certain that the requested documentation totally substantiates your entire absence. Also remember that if your documentation contains sensitive information such as diagnosis, it should be sent to the medical unit, and not given to your supervisor. If you have sent your documentation to the medical unit you are responsible for informing your supervisor that it was sent to the medical unit so that the supervisor can contact the medical unit to verify the information was received.

Entirely too many employees have had management accelerate the removal process against them because they fail to respond in time. Let's not give management this opportunity. ☐



# What the H?



**John Walker,**  
Director,  
Maintenance  
Craft

What is Line H, and where do you find Line H? Every facility in the post office has paperwork showing the square footage of that building, and how many lights, toilets and windows are in the

building; basically, showing the structure of the building. All this information is calculated into how many cleaning hours in a year the facility requires to keep it clean, and in running shape. This is all calculated and compiled on a staffing package for that facility.

A facility's staffing package consists of the PS Form 4852. This is known as a work load analysis and summary. Line H of this form is comprised of the total cleaning frequency time on the left hand side of the PS Form 4852, for daily routes, which is Line A plus the total time for cleaning frequencies on the right hand side of the PS Form 4852, senior routes, which is Line B. In addition, time is allotted for breaks, training and wash up for the year.

All this information is calculated on the PS Form 4582. The most important line on there is Line H. This line shows the fiscal yearly hours that must be met by management. If these hours are not met and fall short, then the custodian is owed those hours at time and a half. If the hours are over, then the Line H was OK. Management must meet 90% of the hours the first year of violation, then 100% the next year.

## What Happens When There is a Violation?

For example, let's say yearly custodial hours are 7,000 hours and they must meet a minimum of 90% of that, which means they must meet 6,300 hours. We then take the LDC 38 hours, which are the clock rings for the custodian cleaning the station, and add them up. If it is over 6,300 hours then management met their Line H obligation. If the total work hours were under 6,300 then whatever the number of hours under the total is paid out at time and a half. For example, if the total LDC 38 hours were 6,000 management is short 300 hours. If the employee makes \$15.10 per hour, the time and a half rate is \$22.65; they would be paid \$22.65 x 300 hours for a total of \$6,795.

## Only Custodial Work Counts!

Management will often have custodians do non-custodial work, such as deliver Express Mail, pickup carriers or put weights in vehicles to try and add hours. However, any work performed that is not custodial work should not be applied to the custodial work hours. To prevent this from happening please ensure that a move off of the custodial operation and onto the operation of the job you are performing is made. If not, management will use those hours for

Line H, saying it was custodial work. It is your money being lost, so make sure you hit a move onto the operation of whatever non-custodial work management has you perform.

This is probably the easiest way to explain Line H. If you have any questions or want to know more on this issue, please feel free to call me or stop by the union office at the plant and I can show you more. You have a right to know how Line H works. Please make sure you get with your steward for any questions or concerns you may have on this or any other work related issue.

In closing I would like to say, fight for your rights! The job you save may be your own. In Solidarity! □

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## New Safety Program

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appointed officials who are responsible for safety. We also have reports from the field that management has instructed those making safety ambassador selections to specifically avoid using union representatives and "agitators". It has been reported the Postal Service is encouraging its managers to select employees who are not active in their unions as ambassadors. Ambassadors should be volunteers and not forced to participate. Local Safety and Health Committees are not part of the program. Ambassadors would participate in creating Job Safety Analysis (JSA) which is currently the function of Article 14 Safety and Health Committees. The APWU has initiated a Step 4 grievance on the implementation of this program (Q15C-4Q-C18055498). We believe the service has violated Article 5 of the CBA by taking this unilateral action, which violates past practice and is a failure to bargain in good faith.

The Local will file grievances where employees have been involuntarily required to act as ambassadors. No one is required to be an ambassador, and they can decline the offer to be one. The Safety Ambassador Program was fully developed and implemented by management, while completely ignoring the APWU's right to bargain over this change. As always, we will fight for the rights of our employees. In Solidarity! □

# Will USPS Get Trumped Over?



**Drew Stevenson,**  
*Editor*

In April President Trump signed an Executive Order that created a task force to study the U.S. Postal Service. Mr. Trump has stated the postal service is on “an unsustainable financial path” and “must

be restructured to prevent a taxpayer-funded bailout.” The task force will take a look at things such as pricing in parcel delivery, declining mail volume, the definition of the universal service obligation in today’s world, USPS role in the economy and in rural areas, and the state of the USPS business model in regard to workforce, operations, costs and pricing. They are expected to submit a report with their recommendations before the end of summer.

Some have speculated the task force is the result of an ongoing feud between President Trump and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in which the president has accused Amazon of not paying its fair share of taxes and harming the postal service by taking advantage of below market rates in its delivery contract with USPS. The president has tweeted “Only fools, or worse, are saying that our money losing Post Office makes money with Amazon. THEY LOSE A FORTUNE.”

The fact is although first class mail volume has been steadily declining for a number of

years package delivery volume has increased exponentially with the rise in online purchasing by consumers. In 2017 Citigroup performed an analysis of postal service pricing for package delivery; it concluded that, as a whole, the postal service was charging below market rates for package delivery so the president isn’t entirely off the mark in that USPS should charge more for those service. As far as losing a fortune, federal regulators have reviewed the Amazon contract each year and have concluded the deal to be profitable for USPS.

## Trump Issues Postal Reform Plan

On June 21, 2018, it was reported on PostalReporter.com that President Trump has recommended restructuring the United States Postal System in an effort to give it a sustainable business model or convert it into a private corporation, such as has been done with many

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# PA Postal Workers Union Convention



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[www.phillyapwu.org](http://www.phillyapwu.org)

## Will USPS Get Trumped Over?

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European postal systems.

The plan states major changes are needed in how the postal service is financed and the level of service Americans should expect from their universal service operator. The task force will make recommendations to this end.

The plan states a privatized postal service would have substantially lower costs and be able to meet changing customer and business needs free from political meddling, and have the means, through private capital markets, to meet operational funding.

### APWU President Dimonstein's Response

The White House proposal on restructuring the federal government, "Delivering Government Solutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," delivered nothing but misinformation and, if implemented, would end regular mail and package services at an affordable cost to 157 million addresses every day. Furthermore, the White House plan is an attack on many federal agencies and the public services they provide.

The White House's plan states, "Like many European nations the United States could privatize its postal operator..." What's left unsaid is European nations charge substantially more for mail services delivered in a much smaller area. They also regularly raise the cost of delivery. For example, the cost of sending a letter in the United Kingdom has increased 80 percent over the past decade. By comparison, the U.S. has the lowest postage rates in the industrialized world.

Eliminating the universal service obligation, as the plan suggests, would hurt business and individuals alike, and would be a dagger aimed at the heart of rural America and undermine e-commerce.

The draconian plan uses "burdening the taxpayers" as justification to promote the privatization of the U.S. Postal Service when the truth is USPS is self-supporting and receives no tax dollars for postal operations.

And, while letter mail volumes are lower, package delivery

is up substantially. No institution is better suited for the e-commerce revolution than USPS. The public postal service serves each and every person and belongs to the people of this country. According to recent surveys by Gallup and the Pew Research Center, it enjoys the highest level of satisfaction and trust of any government service or agency, rating the highest among young people.

Privatizing the Postal Service is not in the public interest or the interest of postal workers and would be nothing more than a raid by corporate pirates on a national treasure.

This outrageous White House plan should be a wake-up call to every postal worker and APWU member. The threats of postal privatization, the threats to decent union jobs, the threats to good services, are real.

The American Postal Workers Union stands with the people of the country and our many allies in the ongoing fight to ensure a vibrant public Postal Service for generations to come. □



**Calvin Smith,  
Director,  
MVS Craft**

Hello union brothers and sisters! I would like to say thank you for letting

me be your MVS Craft Director. And I would like to say thanks to Alex Hawthorne for letting me run on his ticket as his assistant craft director.

Congratulations to Alex on his retirement. His dedication and tireless effort will not be forgotten. I am honored to represent our union. My commitment to each of you will not waiver and my goal is to keep our union strong. Hopefully, you will feel the same. There will be many challenges ahead, but together we can conquer them all. Thank you for your support! □