



The

Union Mail

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"The Labor Movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress."—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights The fight continues!



On 25 March 1965, Martin Luther King led thousands of nonviolent demonstrators to the steps of the capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, after a 5-day, 54-mile march from Selma, Alabama

See page 9

What is The Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL) and how does it work?



Jonathan Smith

President Biden promised the American people if he were elected, he would push a \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief package. Once elected, the President began the hard work of keeping his promise to get the American people the help that was so badly needed. Congress and the Senate passed this historic legislation without even one vote from the Republican side of the aisle. (These are the same Republicans who had no problem supporting and voting for tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans and corporations.) On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed The American Rescue Act into law. A provision within this law is what we now know as the Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). So, what is EFEL?

The EFEL protects all postal workers from the subsequent impact of COVID-19 such as, but not limited to: school closings, virtual learning, lack of child care due to COVID, caring for someone with COVID, quarantining, or having COVID. [See page 8 for the 8 conditions.] All career and non-career employees, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for EFEL. Full-time employees can receive up to 600 hours of paid EFEL, capped at \$2,800 per pay period. Part-time employees can receive up to the proportional equivalent of 600 hours, capped at a proportional equivalent of \$2,800 per pay period. (Please be

advised for the PSEs, the calculations are going to be based on your average hours worked in the last six months. So if you have been out of work for months your payout may be very minimal.)

There has been no determination by the Office of Personal Management (OPM) of what is acceptable documentation for each of the eight qualifying conditions outlined in this report. Therefore, if management has no idea what is acceptable then they also cannot make up their own rules of what is not acceptable. Management has been directed to be reasonable and consistent in their determination. If you are having problems, contact your shop steward to intervene on your behalf. Remember to always keep a copy of anything you submit. Never rely on a verbal agreement. Communicate via 3971 or emails so you have proof of your request.

Every one of the qualifying conditions must be related to COVID-19. You must make it clear you are unable to work because of the qualifying condition you are claiming, and document the reasons. But management should not be asking for birth certificates or notarized letters to support your request. Nothing in the contract or the law supports this unreasonable requirement. If you have been scheduled to get vaccinated, then provide a copy of your appointment with a leave request for 8 hours and provide a copy of both sides of the vaccination card. If you are still feeling side effects the following day, call in. This is covered under the law and management should not request medical docu-

mentation unless you are absent more than three days as per postal sick leave policy.

Also be advised that EFEL does not count as creditable service toward retirement benefits. Employees cannot contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) while on EFEL. It should be also noted that the U.S. Department of the Treasury has allocated only \$570 million to fund supporting this leave for the entirety of the postal and federal workforces. The EFEL will continue through September 30, 2021 but at the rate that it is being requested, I do not think it will last until September. As we get more information, we will send it to you via members only email blast, your shop stewards, and at the union meetings. ☰

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Striving to see the big picture

Chuck Zlatkin, *Legislative and Political Director*

A two-sentence statement was issued by the Postal Service on April 2, 2021, barely announcing that the Postal Service had received \$8.648 billion in COVID-19 funding. One would think that this positive news would have been trumpeted as a victory by and for the Postal Service. It wasn't.

On April 13, 2021, the APWU announced the USPS' receipt of the money and claimed it, rightfully so, as a victory for the union and its allies. The "Save the Post Office Campaign" was a major effort organized by the APWU. It does show that mobilizing our members and working with our allies can bring about victories. The response of the Postal Service, though, is more than troubling.

In the face of the Postal Service's "Delivering For America" 10-year plan that promises slowing of mail delivery, higher prices and shorter hours at post offices, (see pages 6-7) and the under-the-radar announcement of the USPS receiving billions, should anyone be confident that Postmaster General Louis DeJoy will use the infusion of funds to support the furthering of a public Postal Service? Or is it more likely that DeJoy and his number 1 ally, Chair of the Postal Board of Governors Ron A. Bloom will continue their joint plan to bring about the de facto privatization of the Postal Service? Until DeJoy is fired by the Board of Governors and Bloom is replaced on the Board of Governors by President Biden, no one should rest easy about the future of a public Postal Service.

As *The Union Mail* is going to

press, it is expected that the nominations for the Postal Board of Governors made by President Biden will be coming up for their votes before the Senate. The three nominees: former Deputy Postmaster General Ronald Stroman; former Chief Consul for the APWU, Anton Hajjar; voting rights activist and CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute, Amber McReynolds, are strong nominees. Each of them has more expertise with and commitment to the Postal Service than any of the six members of the Postal Board of Governors appointed by former President Trump. It is hoped that in the 50-50 Senate, they will be approved.

The current Postal Board of Governors is composed of six members all appointed by Trump, four Republicans and two Democrats. Many people in the press, a good number of our allies, and even some elected officials are assuming that when Biden's appointees are confirmed, Postmaster Louis DeJoy will be a goner. The Postmaster General is hired at the pleasure of the Board of Governors for an unlimited term and can only be removed by the Board. There is no indication that the two Democrats, Ron A. Bloom and Donald L. Moak will turn against DeJoy. As Board members, they both have remained silent through the worst days of mail

delays brought about by DeJoy's harebrained schemes that impacted service beginning in July of 2020.

As Chair of the Postal Board of Governors, Bloom has been more vocal in his outright support of PMG DeJoy. Bloom praised DeJoy at the February meeting of the BOG in his remarks. And on March 25, 2021, Senator Tammy Duckworth sent a letter to the entire Postal Board of Governors which included her stating, "I request that the United States Postal Service (USPS) Board of Governors take immediate action to fire—for cause—Mr. Louis DeJoy, Postmaster General of the United States (PMG) and Chief Executive Officer of USPS."

On April 5, 2021 Ron A. Bloom as Chairman, replied to Duckworth touting the benefits of the 10-Year Plan and DeJoy, stating, "Postmaster General DeJoy continues to receive the Board's full support as he carries out the Delivering for America Plan." Remember, Bloom is one of the Democrats that people believe will be part of the move to fire DeJoy. We cannot be fooled by wishful thinking

New York Metro Area Postal Union in on record calling for DeJoy to either resign or be fired immediately. NYMAPU also calls upon President Biden to fill the vacancy that Bloom is now sitting in for his holdover year and replace him with another nominee. It is New York Metro Area Postal Union's hope that both the national APWU and the NALC will join with us in our calls! ☑



Workers need the PRO Act now!

Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act was reintroduced in Congress on February 4, 2021. This important piece of legislation would eradicate all the negative, anti-union legislation and executive orders that have been introduced over the past decades to hamper the rights of workers to organize into unions. Originally introduced in 2019, the PRO Act will amend the National Labor Relations Act to remove the stumbling blocks to workers organizing for better wages, benefits and working conditions through collective bargaining. The effectiveness of the anti-worker legislation in the past is evident by the fact that 90% of the American workforce is now not unionized.

The PRO Act would eradicate the so-called “right-to-work” laws prevalent in 27 states. These laws are actually the right-to-work for less laws which limit the ability of unions to

organize, permit workers not to join unions and give workers the right not to pay union dues or fees that unions need for services rendered.

The PRO Act would make it virtually impossible for employers to reclassify workers as independent contractors to deny them benefits and protections they are rightfully entitled to. It would make it easier to choose to be in unions and prohibit employers from forcing workers to attend anti-union meetings on the clock and other union-busting tactics so prevalent when workers are attempting to choose union representation. The PRO Act would put teeth in fines for violating National Labor Relations Act laws, forcing employers to pay up to \$100,000 for violating workers’ rights.

With the PRO Act passing the House in March, five Republicans joined the all but one, Democrats in voting for the bill. Representative

Mondaire Jones (D-NY) commented on the importance of the passage of the PRO Act to people of color, “Unions empower Black and brown people. Anti-union policies most hurt people of color, and they are the most likely to be exploited by greedy corporations.”

As *The Union Mail* goes to press, the PRO Act is now up to the Senate. Will it pass the legislation that would bring about equity and fairness for workers who want to organize and join unions? Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said that he wouldn’t bring the PRO Act up for a vote until he had 50 votes. Working people will now be able to see if their elected leaders will actually walk the walk and vote to pass an act to benefit workers. Now is not the time for words but for action.

Call your Senator today! 202-224-2131 ☑

POSTAL BANKING UPDATE

New York Metro Area Postal Union has been on the front lines fighting the good fight for postal banking for years. The understanding that postal banking was a win-win-win for the Postal Service, postal workers and the people in the communities we serve was documented in an article in *The Union Mail* by Flo Summergrad in 2014! NYMAPU and Moe Biller/Eleanor G. Bailey Retiree Chapter have been in the streets of the Bronx collecting thousands of petition signatures for postal banking. NYMAPU President Jonathan Smith has been championing expanded postal finan-

cial services as the initial step toward postal banking in venues throughout NYC and the nation.

These efforts have led to tangible results, including an April 15, 2021, press conference held in Washington, DC to promote the funding of a pilot program for non-bank financial services in post offices.

The featured speakers included Senator Kirstin Gillibrand, (D-NY), Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Representative Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH). The call is for a \$6 million pilot program in five zip codes in urban communities and five

zip codes in rural communities for fiscal year 2022. The speakers all touched on the need to get banking services to the millions of American families who do not have access to banking services and are therefore exposed to the predatory practices of payday lenders and check cashing businesses.

The pilot program would establish check cashing, bill paying, low-cost ATMs and wire transfers in post offices. The elected officials stated this would be a first step in bringing about full non-profit banking to post offices in every zip code in every post office in the nation. ☑



Bessemer, Alabama, union loss: “BAmazon” is not the end!

After four months of excitement and hope for unionization at the Bessemer, Alabama, Amazon warehouse, the final vote tally showed that less than half of the eligible voters chose to have a union. Amazon is a phenomenally wealthy private company with no union shop in the United States. Senator Bernie Sanders and President Joseph Biden spoke up for the campaign. Yet the union drive ultimately failed.

People objected to robotic working conditions where Amazon workers are held to strict quotas, and those not making the grade are terminated without recourse. Bathroom breaks, especially for delivery drivers, were non-existent, with female drivers having to carry “she-wees” to be able to pee in the trucks without stopping. On Long Island and in Chicago, Amazon workers who protested lack of safety protections for COVID were fired by the company.

There was more coverage of this union drive than any in recent memory. Generally labor struggles are not mentioned in the news at all. Even liberal newspapers have a “Business” section to cover workers’ issues. The focus on Bessemer was because it was Amazon and it was in the historically “right-to-work-(for less)” South. A nationwide poll of registered voters on April 5, 2021, showed that 77% supported a union at the Amazon plant. Support was less among those registered as Republicans but it was still a majority of those polled.

Amazon used the company’s wealth and power to saturate the workplace with aggressive anti-union



propaganda. Captive audience meetings were held on the clock depicting a loss of jobs and freedom for workers in a union. Although questions were “welcomed,” people felt intimidated to speak up in a management-controlled setting. Social media sent anti-union misinformation. The bathrooms were plastered with posters against unions. Each worker was sent more than 5 texts a day telling him or her to vote NO. The carrot and stick routine was also successful: Some workers were encouraged to quit with cash buy-outs; others were threatened with getting fired.

It was a struggle to have the union vote sent in by mail. This was vigorously opposed by Amazon because it gave the company less control. However, an odd last minute placement of a mailbox on Amazon grounds (removed after the vote) caused fear and suspicion of the integrity of the process. This is being challenged by the RWDSU, which filed 23 complaints with the NLRB on April 17, 2021, regarding election violations by Amazon.

The war goes on

A battle was lost but the war goes on. National attention was brought to the hostile work conditions at Amazon. Several other union drives are still ongoing at Amazon facilities.

The rules that hamper organizing are being challenged by the PRO Act which will level the playing field for labor. Even under the present law, the RWDSU (Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union) is taking on Amazon’s actions in court as Unfair Labor Practices.

During the Bessemer campaign, literally dozens of actions took place around the country on February 20 and March 20, 2021. These were called by the Southern Workers Assembly, which was founded in 2012 by veteran labor organizers and Black Workers for Justice. Labor unions, community groups, and elected officials brought support to the union drive. These efforts focused attention on the repressive and racist conditions at Amazon and other workplaces since the Bessemer plant is majority Black and women. Historically, these are the workers who take the lead in trying to win a better life for all.

Forces for social justice are mounting. Like the movements for Black Lives Matter, and the Fight for 15, there is a wave of enthusiasm for winning workplace rights, dignity, and respect. In the face of the COVID pandemic, working people are starting to make priorities of workplace safety and job security.

The sense of the need for solidarity is growing. With the 500+ votes that were challenged by Amazon and not counted, the pro-union votes were close to half. The courage of those who fought the David and Goliath battle at Bessemer Amazon will not be forgotten. The struggle continues. ☐

DeJoy's 10-Year Plan for the Postal Service

By Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

"The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities."

—Title 39. U.S. Code as adopted in the Postal Reorganization Act

On March 23, 2021, the United States Postal Service released "Delivering for America—Our Vision and Ten-Year Plan to Achieve Financial Sustainability and Service Excellence." The 57-page document begins with a joint letter from the 75th Postmaster General of the United States Louis DeJoy and the current Chair of the United States Postal Service Board of Governors Ron A. Bloom. They claim that their plan is designed to rescue the Postal Service from a projected loss over the next ten years of \$160 billion. The DeJoy-Bloom letter states, "our organization is in crisis. Our business and operating models are unsustainable and out of step with the changing needs of the nation and our customers. We have seen steep annual financial losses in the billions of dollars, unmet service performance goals, and less market relevancy as consumer behaviors have changed."

"Delivering for America" promises five main points: (1) A modernized Postal Service capable of providing world class service reliability at affordable prices. (2) Maintenance of universal six-day mail delivery and expanded seven-day package delivery reach. (3) Workforce stability and investment strategies that empower, equip, and engage each employee and put them in the best possible position to succeed. (4) Innovation that grows revenue and

meets changing marketplace needs. (5) Financial sustainability to fund our universal service mission.

The "Delivering for America" plan wants to transform the Postal Service to achieve its lofty goals. When the plan is carefully examined it becomes evident that it is calling for policies that will slow delivery of the mail dramatically, while raising prices, shortening hours at post offices, and with it the likelihood of more cutbacks in service to come.

To accomplish the goal of providing 95% on time delivery, the plan calls for lowering the service standards. Rather than First Class mail being delivered within two or three days, it would be considered on time if it is delivered within five days. First Class mail would no longer be sent on planes; instead all First Class would be transported by truck.

In terms of service hours, the plan states, "we will align our retail footprint, hours, and services to meet current and evolving customer demands. In metropolitan areas that have multiple Postal Service retail facilities, we will evaluate our network of stations and branches and propose to consolidate certain low-traffic facilities where alternate facilities are available to serve customers." This means that a "small percentage" of the 30,000 post offices will have its hours reduced. The plan also details that only a "small percentage of city stations

and branches will qualify for consolidation." If only 10% of post offices would be impacted, that would be cutbacks in 3,000 post offices.

Another aspect to making the plan work is the raising of prices. Ron A. Bloom commented to the Wall Street Journal on why the plan has to increase prices, "They've also told us that the only place you get money is from the sale of your product. The only way that circle squares is if we can charge a little more for our product." Only Bloom knows what he means by a "little more," but we can hazard a guess that it will be a significant increase.

The solutions detailed in the plan have received much criticism from elected officials. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) is the chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. His comment on the 10-year plan that he was "concerned that several of the initiatives in this plan will harm service for folks across the country who rely on the Postal Service for prescription drugs, financial documents, running their small businesses, and more." Peters added, "Cuts to service standards for first-class mail, limiting hours at local post offices and making it more difficult for people to access postal products would adversely impact USPS customers across the nation, including in rural and underserved communities."

Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) is

the chair of the House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform. On August 11, 2020, in response to the policies and actions implemented by Postmaster General DeJoy that were delaying the mail. Representative Maloney introduced legislation in the wake of unprecedented changes proposed by the new Postmaster General to the operations and organizational structure of the U.S. Postal Service. She entitled it the “Delivering For America Act.” It is not known if Postmaster General DeJoy was attempting to be ironic in naming his 10-year plan which institutionalizes cutbacks in service after the Congresswoman’s legislation which fought against such cutbacks in service.

Congresswoman Maloney stated in response to the DeJoy-Bloom Delivering for America plan, “I am extremely concerned about the Postal Service’s unacceptable decision to make permanent slower mail delivery despite substantial public and Congressional opposition, and its failure to fully engage with Congressional leaders and postal stakeholders during the development of Postmaster General DeJoy’s plan,” said Chairwoman Maloney. “Mr. DeJoy’s plan should not be implemented until Congress and the American people have the opportunity to fully review it and provide substantive feedback.”

Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA) is the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Operations. His response to the “Delivering for America” 10-year plan was very direct, “Postmaster General DeJoy has put forth a draconian plan that guarantees the death spiral of the United States Postal Service.” Connolly continues, “Customers and Congress are fed up with DeJoy’s service cuts and record delays. The

only way to right this ship is new leadership, a better vision, and a realistic plan that serves all Americans.”

Congressman Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA) is the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Security. In response to the “Delivering for America” 10-year plan, Lynch stated, “By further degrading mail delivery, the putative 10-year plan’ released by Postmaster General DeJoy runs contrary to the Postal Service’s mission to provide prompt, reliable, and efficient mail services to the American people. It will also impede the efforts of our 645,000 postal employees to process and deliver the mail to every home and business in America six days a week. We should be grateful that, at great risk to their personal health and safety, our dedicated postal workforce has remained on the job throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic. In place of Postmaster General DeJoy’s plan to degrade service, we must continue to develop a bipartisan postal reform plan that responds to the needs of the American people and reflects the commitment and sacrifice of America’s postal workers to deliver the mail on time.”

All of the responses to the “Delivering for America” 10-year plan are not negative. On April 11, 2021 *The Washington Post*, owned by Billionaire Amazon mainstay Jeff Bezos, published a commentary by its Editorial Board calling for Congress to stop attacking Postmaster General DeJoy and to consider his 10-year plan. The commentary includes, “Mr. DeJoy’s plan offers such a prescription. The financial relief consists of ending a mandatory \$6 billion annual postal retiree health benefit prepayment while shifting retirees’ health care to Medicare, plus recalculating the

Postal Service’s arcane legacy obligations to the Civil Service Retirement System – total savings, \$58 billion. Structural reforms include more freedom to charge customers the full cost of mail service and more movement of letters and packages via Postal Service-controlled trucks rather than aircraft belonging to third parties. Mr. DeJoy says the Postal Service could break even by fiscal 2023 even as it invests billions in upgrades such as a planned replacement of its decrepit delivery-truck fleet.”

The Washington Post doesn’t ignore the cutback in service, the rise in rates, and the delays in mail delivery, but rationalizes them: “indeed, delivery-time targets for about three of every 10 first-class pieces would increase from three to as many as five days. But the Postal Service hasn’t regularly been meeting its targets since long before Mr. DeJoy’s time anyway; business mailers probably should pay more than the effectively subsidized rates they currently enjoy.”

What is billed as a rescue plan is actually the de facto privatization of the Postal Service. DeJoy and Bloom make one think of the ancient proverb, “A fish rots down from the head.” And the more that is learned about who Louis DeJoy and Ron A. Bloom are, how they got into the positions they now hold, and how they do business, the more we can understand that the public Postal Service is right now threatened most by those in charge of it. ☹️



EFEL roll-out problems

By Flo Summergrad

Every silver lining comes with a cloud. The good news for postal workers is the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden, contains funding for Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). This will help federal employees (including postal workers) be able to keep their jobs during the ongoing pandemic.

There is a set amount in the fund that will be available to all federal workers who need time off for a COVID-related reason. Because the money is not open-ended, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) which is over all federal agencies, is setting guidelines to ensure a level playing field.

In the meantime, the USPS Human Resources Manager and Executive VP Doug Tulino, has told the managers to approve the leave under an interim policy. First this was until April 1st. Then, still waiting on OPM, it was extended until April 14th. ad now April 28th.

This is where the cloud comes in. As usual, postal management has found a way to confuse and frustrate the implementation of the EFEL. After submitting documentation and requests, some workers are expecting the leave only to find they were not paid. Others are being arbitrarily denied with the usual blanket reasons like “Needs of the Service.”

Supervisors don’t have any explanations. It was “done upstairs,” or “I don’t know.” All people want to know is why. What do I need to provide? What’s missing?

Angry workers are told to “go to the union.” Of course, the union does not make the rules and cannot get clear answers from the managers who do.

What the union is stressing is that

the EFEL is federal law. With or without OPM guidelines, qualifying workers should be paid the leave. President Smith suggested that the Postal Service use the criteria that had worked for last year’s FFCRA during the interim period. Instead, there seem to be conflicting directives.

Of course, there are people who want to take advantage of EFEL. There are PS 3971s being submitted with just the words: “600 hours. Schools are closed,” and no documentation. Or people who argued that the postal limit of two weeks during this interim period meant they were automatically entitled to 80 hours leave for getting a shot of COVID vaccine.

This “Gimme! Gimme!” attitude is wrong. But the intent of the EFEL is to relieve the stress this ongoing pandemic is causing for postal workers and their families. COVID is beginning to surge again in the country and in the Postal Service. Hopefully, with many getting the vaccine, illnesses may not be as severe as last year. But positive tests and the need for quarantine are increasing. This means fear and stress for our workforce which has steadfastly delivered for the public throughout this health crisis.

Internally, postal workers must demand enforcement of protective rules at work. Don’t allow supervisors to ignore social distancing. Take time to wash hands thoroughly and frequently. Mask up! Even if you had the full doses of the vaccine it does not mean you can’t give or get the disease.

Management has gotten complacent with COVID cases. Make sure there is sanitizing of the work area and genuine service talk—not a piece

of paper put out to be signed carelessly.

Most concerning is the uneven role of the OHNAs (the occupational health nurses) who are entrusted with contact tracing. Many ill employees say they were not even asked to ID possible work contacts so they can be sent home to quarantine. Affected employees should be contacting co-workers to let them know to be tested, but often people don’t have phone numbers or information to reach others, or they are too ill to care. It is the responsibility of management and the nurses to make sure all are informed. ☒

8 QUALIFYING CONDITIONS FOR EFEL

An employee is entitled to take EFEL related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
3. is caring for an individual who is subject to such an order as in (1) or has been so advised as in (2).
4. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.
5. is caring for the employee’s son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, requires or makes optional a virtual learning instruction model, requires or makes optional a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning instruction models, or if the child care provider of the son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions.
6. is experiencing any other substantially similar condition.
7. is caring for a family member with a mental or physical disability or who is 55 years of age or older and incapable of self-care, without regard to whether another individual other than the employee is available to care for such family member, if the place of care for such family member is closed or the direct care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19.
8. is obtaining immunization (vaccination) related to COVID-19 or is recovering from any injury, disability, illness, or condition related to such.

The right to vote matters

By Flo Summergrad

In 1962, Fanny Lou Hamer got on a bus to Indianola, Mississippi to register to vote. She was a tenant farmer, the 20th of 20 children and she was 45-years-old. In a recorded interview, she said: “Well, I didn’t know anything about voting; I didn’t know anything about registering to vote. . . . I went to the church, and . . . they were talking about we could vote out people that we didn’t want in office . . . I had never heard, until 1962, that black people could register and vote.” But when the 18 Blacks got off the bus, they were met by men with guns, given an elaborate “literacy test,” and dismissed.

When Fanny Lou got home, the landowner of the place where she lived and worked told her that if she didn’t withdraw her registration, her family would have to leave. When she said no, he threw them out.

Why was the mere act of registering to vote such a threat to the white landowner? Fannie Lou Hamer realized the potential power of the vote and became an organizer. Black votes could challenge Jim Crow laws.

These laws were the way race segregation was carried out. People of color were relegated to the back of the bus. They could not drink from the white water fountain, eat at the white lunch counter, go to the white schools, live in the white neighborhoods. The underpinning of this system was the entrenched political structure.

This made voting rights a fundamental issue of the Civil Rights movement in the ‘60s. A fee to vote (the poll tax) was levied against Black voters. Complicated “literacy”

tests, proof of residence, and outright intimidation and terror kept blacks from registering.

Courageous men and women risked their lives to register voters. They were threatened, arrested, beaten, and murdered. But fear did not stop the movement, which reached a peak on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, during the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Captured on national television, armed white law enforcement officers in gas masks confronted the peaceful marchers with tear gas, clubs, and tubing wrapped in barbed wire.

The sight of this “Bloody Sunday” was the catalyst to passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) on August 6, 1965. The VRA eliminated the use of literacy tests, banned the poll tax, and enacted federal oversight of voter registration and “pre-clearance” of possibly discriminatory state voting laws.

In 2013, Sections 4b and 5 of the VRA were nullified by a Supreme Court decision (*Shelby County v. Holder*). This eliminated “pre-clearance” whereby the federal government had been able to stop potentially discriminatory changes in voting rules before they could damage an election.

Immediately, the 9 states freed from VRA control passed laws that skewed the playing field away from people of color, the elderly, the young, and the disabled. Hundreds of polling places were closed. Arbitrary voter ID laws were enacted.

Nonetheless, the 2020 national and local elections proceeded with large voter turnout and integrity.



Local election officials counted and recounted and found no evidence of alleged fraud. Much of this can be attributed to the success of Vote by Mail in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet in 2021, there is an upsurge of state voter suppression legislation. Even though judges, politicians, and poll watchers of both parties have debunked the Trump allegations of “stolen elections” and “false ballots,” there is a backlash of laws aimed at disenfranchising voters.

It is no accident that the charge was led by Georgia, a state that Biden won which then sent two Democrats—a Black and a Jew – to the Senate in runoff elections. The bill to limit voters --SB 202--was rushed through both houses of the Georgia legislature and signed by the governor in only 7 hours! Ironically, Georgia is the state of the late US Congressman John Lewis who led the historic march that resulted in the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

A lawsuit has already been filed challenging SB 202. Sophia Lakin, deputy director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project says, “This law is driven by blatant racism, represents politics at its very worst, and is clearly illegal.” Other protests are mounting.

The flurry of state voter suppression laws is to pre-empt the thrust of the “For the People Act,” HR 1, which would expand and protect the right to vote. Some states have openly said they will defy the federal law if it is passed. ☐

POSTAL PRIDE


African American history in stamps

The Booker T. Washington postage stamp was issued April 7, 1940. As the first stamp to honor an African American, it was truly a milestone. The first day issue ceremony was held at Tuskegee Institute, which had been founded by Booker T. Washington on July 4, 1881. Postmaster James A. Farley attended the ceremony and placed a wreath. 25 extra postal clerks assisted Postmaster R.W. Harris in preparing the first day covers.

Born a slave, Booker T. Washington became an educator who served as an inspiration to others emerging from slavery. Dr. Washington founded and developed Tuskegee Institute which grew from a one-room shanty to become the respected Tuskegee University of today. Booker T. Washington's work in educational institutions throughout the South influenced the Black community's self-esteem and self-reliance.

In 1956, the 100th anniversary of Booker T. Washington's birth was commemorated by a stamp featuring the cabin of his youth. This became a trend of issuing stamps to honor African Americans in every field of endeavor. These celebrate achievements in the arts, in science, in sports, in music, and in politics. In 1978, the Postal Service began the Black Heritage Series with the Harriet Tubman stamp. Through public demand, freedom fighters like Martin Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, Medgar Evers, and Malcolm X have been memorialized on U.S. postage stamps.

Milestone events in the Civil Rights Movement are also remembered in stamps. In 2005, "To Form a More Perfect Union" was issued, including The Selma March, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit in, the Freedom Riders, the Little Rock Nine, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Brown vs. Board of Education, the integration of the U.S. armed forces (Executive Order 9081), the March on Washington, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

This rich and beautiful collection of stamps is an exciting way to learn African American history. As postal workers, we can take pride in the stamps that honor Black history. They can be viewed in the Smithsonian Postal Museum or online. 

Postal News Briefs

JUDGE RULES USPS CAN MOVE "LIMITED" NUMBER OF MAIL SORTING MACHINES

Federal Judge Sullivan clarified an injunction he issued last September which prevented the USPS from moving 671 mail-sorting machines throughout the country. The judge wrote that moving a small number of machines when "operationally necessary" does not fall under his preliminary injunction. This gives the USPS freedom to remove "outdated" machines to make room for new equipment. The plaintiffs argued against this "clarification," because the Postal Service has not identified the facilities affected nor the number of machines it will move or remove.




FEDEX PAID ZERO (\$0) IN FEDERAL TAXES OVER THE PAST 3 YEARS

FedEx had an effective tax rate of minus -12.8% from 2018-2020, totaling a rebate of \$877 million. The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy said, "This continues a decades-long trend of corporate tax avoidance by the biggest US corporations, and it appears to be the product of long-standing tax breaks preserved or expanded by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) as well as the CARES Act tax breaks enacted in the spring of 2020." Profit and loss were moved around from one year to the next in order to reduce tax bills.



USPS MAY SUE NIKE'S THEFT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The Postal Service may mount a legal challenge to Nike's upcoming Air Force 1 Experimental sneaker, which features designs for the USPS Priority Mail boxes, including the red, white, and blue color scheme and shipping label attached to the heel. But there is no postal logo on the shoe, which makes it an unlicensed and unauthorized product. The USPS expressed disappointment with Nike's failure to respond to attempts to come to a solution. The agency pointed out that the USPS receives no tax dollars and relies on postage and products. "Officially licensed products sold in the marketplace expand the affinity for the Postal Service brand. . . Sales of unauthorized and unlicensed products deny support to the hardworking women and men of the Postal Service." 



CALENDAR

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

5:30 pm

General Membership Meeting

Via Zoom

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

5:30 pm

General Membership Meeting

Via Zoom

As per the NYMAPU Constitution,
NO membership meetings in July and August

ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS

Members Only!

- Download ZOOM App
- Open link
- Enter meeting ID #548-304-2304
- Mute audio
- Video must be on

APWU LOCAL 10 BLDG. CORP

Beginning Balance as of February 1, 2021	_____	\$1,509,885.21
Total Revenue February 2021	_____	\$ 133,704.28
Operating Expenses February 2021	_____	\$324,599.63
Total Net Income February 2021	_____	\$-(190,895.35)
Ending Balance February 28, 2021	_____	\$1,318,989.86



SISTERS! As an APWU member, you are a member of NY METRO P.O.W.E.R. (P.O.W.E.R. stands for Post Office Women for Equal Rights.) Prior to the pandemic, all sisters were invited to P.O.W.E.R. meetings at the Union Office at 1:00 pm, the 4th Wednesday of every month. We are working on alternatives. Diane Erlanger, Director of Organization and Chairperson of NY Metro P.O.W.E.R., told the Union Mail: "In light of the COVID 19 Pandemic P.O.W.E.R. meetings are canceled until further notice. Stay tuned for more information."

ALL COVID-19 MOUs extended through June 4, 2021

Contract negotiations coming SOON

The National Agreement between the USPS and APWU expires on September 20, 2021. Preparation for the APWU negotiating team has already begun. There has been work in all crafts and meetings with the Rank & File Bargaining Advisory Committee, which is a unique feature of our negotiations process to make sure all are represented.

Opening Day for negotiations has not been finalized but it will be some time in the week of June 22nd. Usually the National Convention, which is the highest body of the APWU, guides the national negotia-

tors. Due to COVID, we were unable to gather in a huge meeting, bringing thousands of our representatives together. In the absence of the Convention, the negotiating team needs to hear from the members to learn their key issues and concerns for the Contract. Toward this end, surveys were sent out to the field to get input. So far, thousands of paper and online surveys in digital form have been submitted. In his video presentation on March 31, 2021, President Mark Dimondstein stressed: "It is important to hear from you. Don't hesitate to go on the

APWU.org website and fill out the survey!"

These negotiations represent more than 200,000 workers. It is the largest bargaining unit group in negotiations in the entire country. This means that what APWU does in fighting for this contract has an impact on all of labor. This is an awesome responsibility and all APWU postal workers are a part of it.

Go to APWU Contract Survey, Let Your Voice Be Heard! 🗳️

APWU



New York Metro Area Local, APWU
350 West 31st Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001
BUG

Periodicals class
POSTAGE PAID
at New York, NY

STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR UNION:

Sign up for Metro email blasts. Get the latest information including regular reports from NY Metro leadership.

Fill in below and give to any NY Metro officer or steward or mail to NY Metro Area Postal Union, 350 West 31st Street, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10001.

NAME: _____ FACILITY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS: _____

unionmail@nymetro.org