



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.

***"No one is more dismayed about the mail service delays than postal workers. We take seriously our commitment to serving the public and ensuring they receive the prompt, quality postal service they deserve. I urge this committee to provide the oversight necessary to ensure that postal management is not given the opportunity to further degrade service, and not be allowed to move the goal posts of success."*** — Mark Dimondstein



From the Testimony of Mark Dimondstein, President American Postal Workers Union Before the Committee on Oversight and Reform US House of Representatives "Legislative Proposals to Put the Postal Service on Sustainable Financial Footing" —February 24, 2021

**MARCH IS WOMENS HISTORY MONTH**

# What are unions?



**Jonathan Smith**

If I ask people why they are in a union, most say it's there for if you get in trouble on the job. Not true! Yes, your steward will defend you against unjust discipline or an abusive supervisor.

But more than 90% of workers never get in trouble.

The union is about improving wages, hours, and working conditions for the whole workforce. But we can't just look at the benefits that have already been won. The union is not just a grievance machine. Your steward is not like an insurance agent that you call when you have an accident. The main thing about a union is that it is a collective force for power. We say, "the struggle continues," because when it stops, management moves in to take away the gains that were made. That is the danger in America right now as unions decline.

Our greatest failure is that we always talk about the benefits we get from the union – guaranteed hours, sick and annual leave, bid jobs, salary increases, no lay-off protection, etc. – but not about the struggle.

By unions being active, we raise the level for the entire working class. Laws were won by the efforts of unions: end to child labor, 8 hour day, safety at the job, equal opportunity in hiring and jobs, workers' compensation for injuries, FMLA, and many more. The fight for \$15/hour, for better schools and healthcare – these are causes that workers are fighting for, and they are

sparked by the successes of labor unions over the years.

You often hear people say, "I know my rights! They can't do that to me." In fact, without a union contract, individual workers have no rights in the workplace. The law of the land in the U.S. is known as "employment at will." Legally, an at-will employee can be fired at any time, without just cause. You can lose your job on the whim of a bad boss, and you have very little legal recourse.

Under "employment at will," the individual is powerless. Unions organize the workers as a concerted force, which gives them power.

Nothing was ever given to working people without a fight. Workers fought to form unions and from there, forced employers to negotiate terms in a contract. Until 1971, postal workers had to petition Congress for their pay. After the Great Postal Strike, we had the right to negotiate a national contract, with protections for wages, hours, and working conditions.

Because we have the benefits of a union contract, there is a dangerous tendency for postal workers to get comfortable. We are falling asleep at the wheel. It reminds me of people relaxing safety concerns now that there is a COVID vaccine.

The Supreme Court ruling in June 2018 (the "Janus decision") has had a negative impact on labor unions. The high court ruled that an individual had "rights" to opt out of paying union dues, but was still legally entitled to the benefits won by that union! The direct result was to reduce the union's resources so they had less ability to pursue grievances, mount campaigns, etc.

In the post office, we already had that situation where some workers get a free ride on the dues paid by everyone else. The danger in this is that it weakens the strength of the union in its ongoing struggle with management. On a larger scale, weaker unions are a setback for all workers.

Unions represent the issues that workers have in common. It is in the interest of the billionaire class ("the 1%") to keep us divided. If the wealthy few control our hearts and minds, they play on differences and pit people against each other. As unions have declined in the US, there has been a corresponding increase in racism and bigotry.

Building unions brings us together instead of divided. Unions make us stronger. There is power in concerted action. ☐

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# Will legislation save the Postal Service, or will politics destroy it?

Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

This column is dedicated to getting the word out regarding legislative and political actions which impact upon NYMAPU members, all postal workers, and the people who depend upon a public Postal Service. Legislation is straightforward most of the time; politics, unfortunately, usually not. A good example of straightforward legislation is the bipartisan USPS Fairness Act which on February 4, 2021 was re-introduced into both the House (HR 695) and the Senate (S 145). This legislation would repeal the portion of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 (PAEA) that required the USPS to fully pre-fund its retiree health care benefits and to do it within a 10-year window, creating a manufactured financial crisis for the Postal Service. The PAEA, which was signed into law by then President George W. Bush, required the prefunding of 75 years of future retirement health care for people who were not even born yet. The prefunding mandate was the cause of the overwhelming majority of the Postal Service's net losses since 2007.

The USPS Fairness Act was originally introduced in February 2020. The bill passed the House by a vote of 309-106, with 87 Republicans voting in favor, but the bill was put on hold as the pandemic escalated. The re-introduction of the bill in the current Congress was carried out by the original co-sponsors of the legislation: Representatives Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Tom Reed (R-NY), Carolyn

B. Maloney (D-NY), Brian Fitzpatrick (D-PA), and Colin Allred (R-TX) and Senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Brian Schatz (D-HI). It should be passed easily. "The bipartisan USPS Fairness Act is one of the first steps toward returning the Postal Service to solid financial footing, and I urge Congress to quickly pass this critical legislation," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. The passage of the USPS Fairness Act would return the Postal Service to the procedures in place prior to the PAEA, utilizing a pay-as-you-go method for retiree benefits, and freeing the Postal Service from suffocating financial burdens. It would appear that with President Biden's promises to safeguard the Postal Service, this legislation will be signed into law once it passes both houses of Congress.

## Politics

It was hoped that with the passage of the PAEA, the creation of the Postal Board of Governors (BOG), and the oversight of the Postal Regulatory Commission, politics would no longer be present in the running of the Postal Service. Under the Trump administration, the appointment of Steven Mnuchin as Treasury Secretary, and the compliance of the BOG, the Postal Service was as politicized as ever, resulting in the questionable appointment of Louis DeJoy as PMG. It is now hoped that with the Biden administration in office, such politics would no longer be a force in the Postal Service and that those responsible for making



**BOG Chair Ron A. Bloom**

decisions governing the direction of the post office would do so by what is best for the American people and not

partisan politics.

Ron A. Bloom has been a member of the Postal Board of Governors (BOG), completing his term on December 8, 2020. He is now in his hold-over year. A BOG member may stay on up to one year, or until an appointment is made to replace them. Bloom was appointed by then President Trump. At the time of his appointment, Bloom was the only Democrat of the four members of the BOG. There were five remaining vacancies.

Bloom followed Trump's wishes by voting for Trump's friend and major donor, Louis DeJoy, to become Postmaster General. Since June 15, 2020, Bloom has been silent in the face of DeJoy's cutbacks to slow and degrade the mail. (Bloom is a Democrat.)

On June 18, 2020, the Senate approved Trump's two appointees to the Postal BOG, Donald L. Moak, a Democrat, and William D. Zollars, a

*continued on page 4*

# Will legislation save the Postal Service, or will politics destroy it?

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Republican. Three vacancies remained, with the board now consisting of four Republicans and two Democrats.

On February 9, 2021, at the public meeting of the Board of Governors, Ron A. Bloom, was elected by the whole Trump-appointed board to become their chair. Ramon Martinez IV, a Republican, was voted vice-chair. Bloom was nominated by Robert Duncan, the outgoing chair. Duncan, a Republican, was under criticism, because while serving as the chair of the Postal BOG he remained the head of two PACS, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's Senate Leadership Fund.

The unanimous election of Bloom took place in the midst of a growing outcry from members of the Congress, editorials in major mainstream publications, and consumer advocacy groups, all calling for President Biden to fire the Postal Board of Governors. According to law the Postal Board of Governors "shall represent the public interest generally." The growing sentiment was that the BOG by selecting DeJoy and then remaining silent during DeJoy's destructive reign was simply not doing its job.

At the February 9 meeting, DeJoy spoke, publicly apologizing for the decline in mail delivery, but he attributed it to the pandemic and the unexpected rise in package mail. Newly elected chair Ron A. Bloom agreed with DeJoy's assessment of the problems that caused the mail delays, not mentioning at all the introduction of the failed policies of DeJoy that slowed and degraded mail delivery. Vice-Chair Martinez stated that the Postal Service needed dynamic leadership and DeJoy was the man for the job. From this com-

ment, It appears that the swamp is as fraught with difficulties as ever. Politics over substance.

On February 16, 80 House Democrats sent a letter to President Biden calling upon the President to fill the remaining vacancies on the U.S. Postal Service's Board of Governors to give it a Democratic majority that could vote out Postmaster General Louis DeJoy. Led by Reps. Alma S. Adams (D-NC), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and Gerry Connolly (D-VA), the letter asked Biden to nominate board members to fill the three current vacancies "as expeditiously as possible." They hoped that doing so would allow the BOG to "function in a more nonpartisan, effective manner." The Congressmembers hoped that the new board members would "seriously consider" if DeJoy should remain as PMG.

Also, on February 16th, 34 Democrat senators wrote to PMG DeJoy demanding information on the continued mail delays and questioning whether "your decisions and directives continue to hinder mail delivery."

As *The Union Mail* goes to press, Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) and Representative James Comer (R-KY), the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, invited Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, Board of Governors Chairman Ron Bloom, Postal Service Inspector General Tammy L. Whitcomb, American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein, and Quad/Graphics Chairman Joel Quadracci to a hearing on legislative reforms for the Postal Service on February 24. "The hearing will examine legislative proposals to place the Postal Service on a more sustainable financial footing going

forward while preserving the delivery performance standards on which the American people rely," explained Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Comer.

## **DeJoy's Plan: Slow down mail. Raise prices.**

On February 12 *The Washington Post* reported on PMG DeJoy's much awaited 10-year plan for the Postal Service which has yet to be released. DeJoy's major changes would include combining all first-class mail into one tier and the subsequent creation of new, slower delivery standards.

DeJoy's plan would eliminate first-class letters being sent on airplanes and mandating that all mail would be transported by truck. This would slow delivery of first-class mail dramatically. It would also be a boon to trucking firms contracted by the USPS, which would include firms in which DeJoy and his wife both held millions of dollars in stock. DeJoy's plan would also dramatically raise pricing for consumers and businesses. The question is how Congress will react to DeJoy's plan to slow mail and raise prices once it is finalized?

## **Where we stand now**

The push for Biden's appointing "pro-public service" members to the vacant positions on the BOG would create a Democrat majority on the board and facilitate the removal of DeJoy as PMG. The question remains as to whether Biden will replace hold-over BOG member Bloom, now the BOG chair with another appointee, which is his right. This would give Biden four picks for the BOG. If not, will his three picks matter? Will Bloom and Moak now vote to oppose DeJoy? 🗳️

**UPDATE! See page 8:  
Biden picks three for the BOG**

## REST IN POWER!

# Karen Lewis and Anne Feeney

By Flo Summergrad

*March is Women's History Month – a time to celebrate the vital (and often forgotten) role women have played in the movement for social justice. In 2021, we have already lost two sisters who inspired the struggles of thousands of people.*

### Karen Lewis, the people's champion



Upon the passing of President Emerita Karen GJ Lewis on February 8, 2021, the Chicago Teachers' Union issued a statement: "Karen did not just lead our movement. Karen was our movement. Karen taught us how to fight, and she taught us how to love." The CTU became a model for how a public sector union wins its workers' rights by fighting for the community it serves.

The Chicago Teachers Union is the third largest teachers' local in the U.S. It "represents more than 25,000 teachers and educational support workers in the Chicago Public Schools, and, by extension, the nearly 400,000 students and the families they serve." In 2012, CTU President Karen Lewis began to prepare for a strike during contract negotiations, with 98% support from her members. In addition to common labor issues like wages and benefits, there were concerns that affected the quality of education for the students. The city was on a course toward privatization of schools in gentrified neighborhoods, pushing out unionized teachers and downgrading the quality of public education. This included school closings, teacher layoffs, large class size, lack of classroom materials, and rigid evaluation practices. Parents formed a support organization that kept the community

informed. They marched, picketed, and were deeply involved in the teachers' struggle.

The Chicago Teachers Strike forged a bond between the public sector workers and the public. The actions of the Chicago Teachers Union sparked a series of victorious strikes across the country—significantly in anti-union "right-to-work" states like West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Colorado, Kentucky, and beyond—coast to coast, continuing to this day. A sea of "Red for Ed," striking teachers in red t-shirts, became a symbol of courage and militancy for the U.S. labor movement. They say, "Without Karen, there would not have been Red for Ed."

The CTU calls Karen "part of the vanguard of Black women who have forged a heroic path of labor, justice, and civil rights in our city." The politics of Chicago have changed because of her. "We have more fighters for justice and equity because of Karen, and because she was a champion—the people's champion."

### Anne Feeney, music power



The labor movement lost a sparkling source of inspiration when singer/songwriter Anne Feeney died of COVID on February 3rd. It is impossible to imagine that she will no longer be at marches, protests, picket lines and labor conferences to rally the men and women battling on the ground.

Anne herself was a member of the Pittsburgh Musicians Union, then the President – the first female president of an US Musicians Local. She helped form AFM Local 1000, an organization for traveling musicians, so they could earn pensions. Since 1987, Anne Feeney performed more than 4000 times, singing for miners, steelworkers, transit workers, people fighting foreclosure, sweatshop workers, farm workers, and many more. When activists built a camp to keep Berkeley, California's Main Post Office from closing, Anne Feeney was there singing on the PO steps.

Anne was passionate about the role that artists and musicians can play in energizing the mass movements. In an interview with UE News, she said: "I can't even imagine the civil rights movement without singing. I can't imagine the early CIO days without singing. Music instills power and bravery. Those kids, sweating in those Alabama churches, singing *We Shall Not Be Moved*, then walking right out into a barrage of police dogs and fire hoses. It's the music that allowed them to face all of that, and build the movement and change the world ..."

The voices of brave and powerful sisters like Karen Lewis and Anne Feeney continue to speak and sing to us. These great women will never die. They live on in our actions as we continue the fight for social justice. ☐

# APWU is fighting for COVID-related pay (update and next steps)

*Excerpted from letter from Vance Zimmerman, APWU Industrial Relations Director*

**F**amily First” leave expired on December 31, 2020, when Congress failed to renew it. While it is no longer current law, postal management has the option, and we believe the responsibility, to continue to abide by the “Family First” principles and grant paid “administrative” leave for those off work due to exposure or diagnosis of COVID, regardless of where the exposure may have taken place.

After numerous efforts and discussions with management, they have refused to do so. Management has taken the position and issued a “decision tree” that administrative leave will only be automatically paid if the employee contracted the disease in the workplace and in all other situations the employee must use their own personal leave. Despite much progress and positive results over the last year between the national parties in addressing COVID-related health and safety concerns, the APWU is at loggerheads with management on this issue. It is a disturbing signal that the safety and health of the employees and our families is taking a back seat to “business.” Postal employees have been deemed as not only “essential”—but *expedient*. *And it is even more egregious when one considers that the APWU and other postal unions were*

*instrumental in securing \$10 billion in Congressional emergency relief to the USPS in part to cover the increased expenses of protecting the health and safety of postal workers.*

Postal management has the responsibility under the union Collective Bargaining Agreement to protect the safety of all employees. Article 14 states, “It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in **all** present and future installations.” (My emphasis)

As this important battle continues, we recommend the following for any postal worker that has been exposed to COVID-19, is experiencing symptoms, or been diagnosed as COVID positive/presumptive positive:

- Follow the USPS policy as outlined in a multitude of stand-up talks, policy documents, and statements and stay home from work.
- Follow the USPS policy and report the diagnosis, exposure, or symptoms to the USPS.
- When reported, workers should ask management what next steps to take.
- When management initiates the action that the employee cannot report to work, workers should ask whether they will be placed on administrative leave.

- If management instructs and compels workers to use their own leave (sick or annual) a grievance should be filed documenting the fact circumstances of each case, including the date when management was notified, management response, name(s) of management officials involved and when and how exposure happened.

Grievances should be filed under Article 14 adding any safety and leave provisions of Article 19. The Article 14 contention is that management initiated a policy that employees not report to work due to COVID-19 related reasons. . . . As a remedy request administrative leave, replacement of any used sick or annual, payment of LWOP when used and that management cease and desist the unsafe policy and practice. ☒

*[A grievance template is available for our stewards.]*

The management policy of denying paid administrative leave is creating a dangerous workplace by encouraging employees to be in the work place and not report symptoms and exposure out of fear of not being properly paid.

—Vance Zimmerman, APWU Director of Industrial Relations

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- See your claims year-to-date
- Get health and wellness information

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# COVID-19 tracing: Look out for each other!

On January 21, 2021, management issued a COVID policy chart, the latest “decision tree,” with instructions for handling COVID cases in the postal workforce. This policy chart makes it clear that infected employees will only be paid administrative leave if they can prove that they contracted the virus at work.

Due to HIPPA privacy laws, how do you know if the person you worked next to tested positive? When someone reports a positive COVID test to their supervisor, the checklist filled out by the boss does not get shared with the co-workers.

Our union reps get a general report of the craft and station where a person is possibly COVID positive and the number of people quarantined. President Smith finds it disturbing that when a craft employee is positive, there are rarely quarantines of co-workers. But, when he

gets a report of an EAS employee with COVID, there are 6 or 7 people quarantined.

It appears that the Postal Service is more concerned with saving money and protecting itself from liability than with the health and well-being of the workers. Financial constraints may force people to come to work even when they would be better off staying out until tested.

The position of NY Metro Area Postal Union is that since the USPS is not looking out for us, we have to look out for each other. How? By self-reporting to those we have had contact with at work, we are fulfilling a moral responsibility to tell them to go get tested. There is no shame in getting sick; the shame is in hiding the fact from people who have been exposed to you. Naming who you worked with when you got sick shows connection to the job. If the person named then tests posi-

tive, s/he has the grounds for administrative leave and possibly a compensation claim.

At the same time, we must be vigilant about contagion. Just because there is a vaccine does not mean that everything is okay. Continue hand washing and social distancing. Always wear a mask! And if there has been an exposure, insist on thorough sanitizing. If not, call on the union. You can write a statement and file Form 1767. This will be a record of workplace contamination if people in that area get sick.

As essential workers, we were supposed to be prioritized for the vaccine. But it didn't happen. There must be pressure on our elected officials to get priority access to the vaccine for postal workers who want it. We can't depend on the USPS to make these demands, although they should. Our Union is fighting. We have to add our voices to the fight. ☐

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## Let's stop the spread! It's up to us!

By Tyrone Blount, Shop Steward Tour 2 Morgan P&DC

In my opinion, Morgan can be a super spreader for COVID-19 if we don't protect ourselves and each other. It's hard to flatten the curve for the workers in Morgan because it's difficult to social distance. In the locker rooms, people let down their guard because no one is around to tell us to mask up. So it's up to US to make sure we keep our faces covered. The water in the bathrooms is cold so washing your hands regularly

is crazy in cold water. So it's up to US to put in 1767s!

I believe the biggest problem the post office has is the leave policy with no pay. Congress didn't extend the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. So, we have to make sure that people who get COVID on the job can prove it with statements from co-workers about exposure.

Without a plan on protecting or testing employees or temperature check-

ing (which I personally don't think will help detect if employees are affected) how do we stop the spread? As to contact tracing, I believe the nurses aren't asking the right questions to quarantine employees. Affected employees are around each other basically every day. YOU know who you work with. So when there is a positive test, co-workers have to write statements to go with the report to the nurse. ☐

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# *\$416 COLA increase for ALL APWU-represented workers*

**E**ffective February 27, 2021, under the terms of our Collective Bargaining Agreement, APWU-represented workers received an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of \$416. This translates into a 20 cent/hour raise, starting in the pay checks dated March 19, 2021 (PP 06/21). This is the fifth COLA under the current contract.

The APWU is proud that we are the only postal union that will receive the full \$416 amount for all employees, regardless of pay grade or step. This moves us toward the goal of bringing the lower paid workers up.

Although we are all tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) in calculating the COLA, the other postal unions will have the amount pro-rated based on different salary levels. This has been nicknamed “COLA-lite,” which means that those in a lower pay scale get less of a raise.

The latest COLA brings the total

Cost of Living raises under the 2018 contract up to \$1414/year, which becomes part of the base pay. This is important because it means the hourly raise counts towards Overtime pay, Sick and Annual Leave, Sunday premium, and retirement calculations.

This COLA “roll-in” was not guaranteed with the COLA formula. It has been a negotiating point in every contract since the start of USPS/Union collective bargaining in 1971. “Roll In the COLA!” was a major contract demand in 1978—the year of the wildcat strike at the New Jersey Bulk Mail Center and a contentious Convention battle. In that year, then-APWU President Emmet Andrews pushed for a tentative Agreement that gave up the cost-of-living provision. The Rank & File Bargaining Committee (which included future VP and President Bill Burrus) refused to agree. Ultimately, the effort to keep the COLA prevailed and over the years has

meant thousands of dollars in pay increases.

COLA increases do not apply to non-career workers—the Postal Support Employees (PSEs). Instead, the 2018 contract contained several wage increases specific to PSEs. (As of this May 22, 2021, PSEs will get a 20 cent/hour wage increase). Winning COLA rights for PSEs will be a struggle at the upcoming collective bargaining between the USPS and APWU.

The existing COLA formula does not match the rate of inflation. Still, the periodic COLA increases have been a crucial contractual benefit that enabled postal workers to somewhat keep pace with the cost of living. The Postal Service is well aware of its importance – in every contract negotiation, the USPS always tries to put our COLA raises on the chopping block. APWU has always fought to keep it going. This current raise shows that “it pays to belong!” ☑

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## **HISTORIC APPOINTMENT**

# *Biden picks 3 to Postal Board of Governors*

**J**ust days after the APWU and its allies presented over 400,000 petition signatures calling for President Biden to appoint pro-public Postal Service members to the Postal Board of Governors (BOG) and hours after Postmaster General DeJoy’s disgraceful performance before the House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, President Biden announced three historic appointments to the Postal BOG.

Biden named former Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman, former APWU General Counsel Anton Hajjar, and Amber McReynolds, Chief Executive of the National Vote at Home Institute. Appointing people who have experience with postal issues is a much needed action. Biden’s appointment of two men of color and a woman to the existing BOG, made up of six white men, was historic. ☑



# President Biden ousts anti-labor agency heads

By Flo Summergrad

**W**e have illusions about the independence of agencies like the National Labor Relations Board and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). They are not independent. In fact, their policies are controlled by the political administration in power. Ousting Trump's appointees will significantly change the direction of agencies like OSHA and the NLRB.

## OSHA empowered to address COVID exposure at work

Both OSHA and the NLRB have a direct effect on our lives as workers. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, OSHA had little or no presence in setting rules to protect people where they work. At best, this was left up to the state or local government; at worst, it was up to the individual employers, most of whom followed their usual guide of profit over people. During the election campaign, Joe Biden promised to direct OSHA to implement stronger national coronavirus safety standards in the workplaces.

On January 21, 2021, President Biden fulfilled this promise by issuing an "Executive Order on Health and Safety." This Executive Order applies to the Postal Service, the only government agency subject to OSHA enforcement. It mandates that "the Federal Government must take swift action to reduce the risk that workers may contract COVID-19 in the workplace. That will require issuing science-based guidance to help keep workers safe from

COVID-19 exposure, including with respect to mask-wearing; partnering with state and local governments to better protect public employees; enforcing worker health and safety requirements; and pushing for additional resources to help employers protect employees."

To make this work, the Executive Order gives the Secretary of Labor, through the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, broad authority to reshape OSHA's enforcement of health conditions on the job. Vance Zimmerman, the APWU national Director of Industrial Relations, points out that "This is a complete change from the Trump Administration that had directed OSHA to take a relative 'hands off' approach to worker safety – especially concerning COVID-19." Now we expect guidance on health and safety that will be consistent throughout the country. We can demand more management accountability than we have had over the last year of the pandemic.

## Biden Changes anti-Labor Direction of the NLRB

Biden also forced a swift turnaround in the NLRB. The National Labor Relations Board under President Trump took direct aim at unions and union organizing. On the very day of his inauguration, President Biden immediately fired General Counsel Peter Robb, even though Robb still had 10 months left in his term. Robb, an aggressive

anti-union management lawyer, had spearheaded the attack on labor through his position as head of the legal arm of the NLRB. Since November 2017, he acted to reshape labor law to favor employers, centralizing his power to try to squeeze out regional directors.

To replace Robb, Biden installed Acting General Counsel Peter Sung Ohr, the pro-labor head of the Chicago NLRB. Ohr immediately rolled back ten anti-union directives of the Trump NLRB. In his opinion, Robb's policies were inconsistent with the National Labor Relations Act and Board law, as follows: "Section 1 of the Act makes clear that the policy of the United States is to encourage the practice and procedure of collective bargaining and to protect the exercise by workers of their full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment."

Ohr is bringing life back to the National Labor Relations Board. Unfair Labor Practice cases will be allowed to move forward. Stewards will be allowed to function without fearing discipline. Regional directors will be able to address the backlog of cases.

But don't sit back. These pro-worker appointments at the top are good for labor. But the battle to make these agencies work for us has to be from the bottom up. The struggle continues. ☐

## POSTAL PRIDE

# Tough postal women played historic role

The national contract we have today, and the very right to bargain collectively was a result of the Great Postal Strike of 1970 – 51 years ago. Since March is both the month of that famous strike as well as Women’s History month, we need to appreciate our courageous sisters who were out there. At that time, women were a small percentage of the postal work force. They had to fight for acceptance, for bathrooms, for the right to wear pants, for seats in the cafeteria. They had to be tough. And the struggle forged them into leaders.

We can be especially proud that our Local’s historic role as a leader was based on its inclusion of women as they came into the ranks of postal workers. Retired Manhattan-Bronx Postal Union Executive VP Philip Seligman explained how an influx of mostly black women in the NY Post Office in the ‘60s transformed both the post office and its unions: “They brought a new force with them, a dramatic change. . . The change was a more aggressive change, they wouldn’t take abuse, they fought back, they hit back, and it was good.” (*There’s Always Work at the Post Office*, Phillip Rubio, Ch. 7) Our own Eleanor Bailey, late President of the Moe Biller Retiree Chapter, and the late Josie Macmillian, NYMAPU President in the ‘80s and ‘90s, organized direct action protests with the support of Local President (later National President) Moe Biller.

Some of these same sisters founded Post Office Women for Equal Rights (P.O.W.E.R.) so that all sisters in the APWU could have a voice. Together we have the power to fight for all workers

Today, more than 50% of NY Metro’s fighting shop stewards are women. More than half our Local Executive Board is female. ☐

## Postal News Briefs

### AMAZON SUED IN NYS OVER COVID HEALTH AND SAFETY

On February 16, NY Attorney General Letitia James filed suit against Amazon for not protecting its workers against COVID, then retaliating against people who complained. The case involves a delivery depot in Queens and a warehouse in Staten Island, where Christian Smalls, a worker who led a protest over safety was fired last March. James acted in spite of a lawsuit from Amazon filed a week before which attempted to block the pending charges. The tech giant claimed that workplace health and safety is a federal, not a state, concern. James countered with the statement: “Amazon’s extreme profits and exponential growth rate came at the expense of the lives, health and safety of its frontline workers.”



### BEN FRANKLIN ON OVAL OFFICE WALL

President Biden removed Trump’s portrait of Andrew Jackson from the Oval Office and replaced it with a painting of Benjamin Franklin. This painting was the model for the Ben Franklin stamp issued in 1993. Biden’s choice was based on Franklin’s role as a scientist, but he is best known to postal workers as the father of the United States Post Office.



### YOGI BERRA STAMP WILL BE ISSUED IN 2021



Baseball great Yogi Berra will be honored on a stamp during this coming year. Yogi won 10 World Series with the NY Yankees. He was considered the best catcher in the American League in the 1950s and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972. But he was also beloved by all for his memorable sayings, like “It’s not over til it’s over!” “It’s déjà vu all over again!” “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

### REP KEVIN HERN INTRODUCES ANTI-LABOR “UNION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT”

On February 15, Congressman Kevin Hern (R-OK) introduced a bill specifically attacking unions in federal workplaces. H.R. 814, entitled the Union Accountability Act, would prevent union representatives from performing their functions during work. The bill seeks to block Biden’s Executive Order 14003, which enables stewards to represent workers on the clock. Hern’s argument states that paid union time is “wasteful spending,” that was stopped by the Trump White House. That flies in the face of reality which is that union reps are only a small percentage of the work force. ☐

## CALENDAR

### Wednesday, March 17

5:30 pm

General Membership Meeting  
via Zoom

### Wednesday, April 21

5:30 pm

General Membership Meeting  
via Zoom

### Wednesday, May 19

5:30 pm

General Membership Meeting  
via Zoom

## ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS

### Members Only!

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

**ALL COVID-19 MOUs extended through March 26, 2021**

## APWU LOCAL 10 BLDG. CORP

Beginning Balance as of December 1, 2020	\$1,514,874.12
Total Revenue December 2020	\$ 145,970.41
Operating Expenses December 2020	\$ 153,688.21
Total Net Income Decem 202	\$ -(6,717.80)
Ending Balance Decembert 31, 2020	\$1,508,156.32

## APWU LOCAL 10 BLDG. CORP

Beginning Balance as of January 1, 2021	\$1,508,156.32
Total Revenue January 2021	\$ 130,914.85
Operating Expenses January 2021	\$ 129,185.96
Total Net Income January 2021	\$ 1,728.89
Ending Balance January 31, 2021	\$1,509,885.21

**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."

# April 28, 2021 – Workers Memorial Day

**A**pril 28 is **Workers Memorial Day**—a time to commemorate the millions of workers who die each year because of unsafe conditions at work. We honor those we lost by fighting on for safe and healthy workplaces. In the APWU, we usually remember those who were killed by industrial accidents or Joseph P. Curseen and Thomas L. Morris, Jr., who were killed by anthrax in the mail. In NY Metro Area Postal Union, we will never forget Mike McDermott and Ed Domingo who were killed at the NJ BMC by unsafe equipment, Willie Gonzalez, the Bronx truck driver murdered on a remittance run with no security; and Nadiya Assad, killed in the DVD parking lot where management had ignored requests for lighting and stop signs. This year we have a new enemy—COVID 19 at the job.

From the start of the pandemic, health care workers found themselves dangerously short of the proper protective equipment. A year ago, nurses around the country held protests demanding high quality masks and gowns that would keep them safe. There were workplaces where employers refused to let employees wear masks. And the giant Amazon company is currently facing a lawsuit in NY State for profiting from the health crisis while disregarding worker safety. And as to the Postal Service, while the union forced some concessions in 2020, the APWU has strongly objected to the latest postal policy.

**Stand up for Safe Jobs! EVERY WORKER'S RIGHT!**



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

Periodicals class  
POSTAGE PAID  
at New York, NY

BUG

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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.

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COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

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