

Statement from President Dimondstein: Postal Workers in a Time of Crisis

Since the early days of the Postal Service, we postal workers have helped stitch the fabric of the country together. Even in times of crisis – whether natural disaster, conflict, or economic calamity – the Postal Service has always been there, steadily reaching every American home and business in their time of need.

Today is a time of crisis unlike any we've seen in generations. A global pandemic threatens the health of millions and is leading to an economic collapse that could dwarf the Great Recession.

Hundreds of millions of people are sheltered in their homes, avoiding the grocery, pharmacies and other stores as we attempt to slow the spread of the virus. Many workers will soon be without paychecks. Public health officials are desperate to effectively disseminate health-saving information, tests, and drugs.

The United States Postal Service is critical to the country's public health and economic stability in this moment. Postal workers are up to the task. Our network of 157 million daily delivery points, 35,000 post offices and more than 500,000 dedicated public servants is uniquely positioned to serve the country in the weeks and months ahead.

The Postal Service is the only way for millions of people to receive their medications. Last year, we delivered over a billion prescriptions. It's the only way to disseminate stimulus checks and critical public health information and supplies to every household. Vote-by-mail will be essential to holding elections in November. And, in this new era of "social distancing," it's still a time-tested way to connect families and friends no matter where they are.

But if the Postal Service is to meet the challenge of the times, two immediate issues need to be resolved:

First, postal workers must have safe workplaces. Our union is working constantly to ensure the Postal Service provides for the health and safety of our members and the mailing public. We have already secured important changes to leave, staffing and post office policies. We remain concerned that the distribution of personal protective equipment and sanitizers has been uneven across the country.

Every member, from the shop floor to the national office, must continue our demand that we have safe workplaces, safe staffing and the necessary equipment and supplies to fulfill our mission.

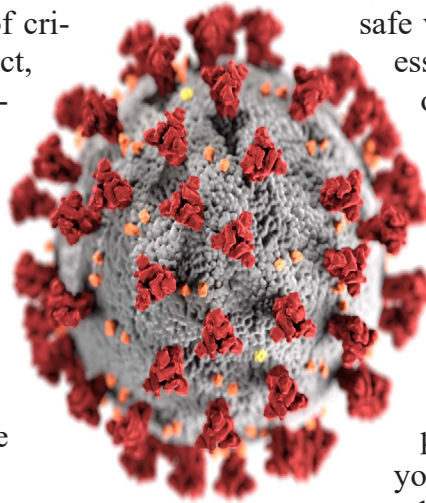
Second, Congress must act immediately to ensure the financial viability of the Postal Service. We were deeply disappointed that stimulus legislation passed Wednesday did not include vital relief for the Postal Service. The economic fallout of the pandemic calls for measures far beyond the prefunding repeal we've long sought.

House legislation initially sought in excess of \$25 billion in direct relief for the USPS. If Congress does not act soon and on a similar scale, the Postal Service will run out of cash in the coming months. Every member must demand of their representatives that postal relief is included in the next stimulus.

Reports surfaced this week that the White House and Treasury Department oppose cash support for the Postal Service. Their resistance would condemn the country's most trusted and highest-rated federal agency to its demise. It would destroy the one institution capable of reaching every person, hinder the country's public health response, and cripple the \$1.4 trillion mailing and shipping industry.

Our union had planned to spend much of this month commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Great Postal Strike. Those plans have obviously changed. But let us remember one important lesson the 1970 strike proved: the country relies on the hard work of dedicated postal workers, especially in the toughest of times. I believe our current crisis underscores the value of our work and the universal network we uphold.

Finally, let me conclude by recognizing the extraordinary role postal workers have already played in the throes of this crisis. These are unusual times and many of us are understandably anxious – for ourselves, our families, our jobs and our communities. I, like so many others, am heartened by the extraordinary courage of seemingly ordinary workers serving their neighbors in times of need. Together, let's support each other, encourage each other, demand safe workplaces together and continue to serve each other in these extraordinary times.



APWU Pushes for Postal Workers During Pandemic

As the coronavirus pandemic unfolds, APWU leaders are in constant discussion with USPS management, demanding temporary leave policies, telework provisions where possible, and better safety policies, supplies and equipment.

“Our very first priority is ensuring that the Postal Service provides for the health and safety of our members,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “Postal workers are on the frontlines of the pandemic response. We need to ensure that the hardworking men and women who keep medicine, medical equipment, food, supplies and other essential goods moving through the mail are protected as the country relies on us in ways they never have before.”

“We continue to demand that the Postal Service provides the equipment and cleaning supplies we need to do our jobs safely,” said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. “Postal management knows we will never let up on this issue, and it is their responsibility to provide these products, including hand sanitizer, gloves, and masks.”

As reported earlier this month, a Maintenance Management Order went out for each post office to increase their cleaning standards (including using cleaning products from before the CTC implementation) and provide gloves, masks, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.

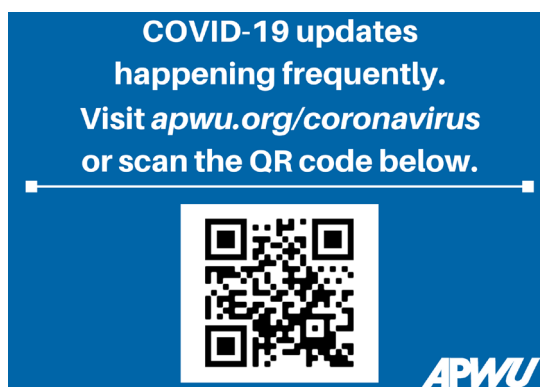
If the MMO is not being followed in your workplace, contact your local or state organization so they can reach the appropriate National Business Agent or your Regional Coordinator to address the issue.

New Memorandums of Understanding concerning pay, telework, leave include:

- Temporary Expanded Sick Leave for Dependent Care During COVID-19
- Temporary Additional Paid Leave for PSEs
- Telework for IT/AS unit, Customer Care Centers, and Mail & Shipping Solutions Center, and HRSSC

The Postal Service has also agreed to institute safer social distancing procedures in lobbies, including marking waiting distances for lines and appropriate distances from the window clerks. These procedures will make it safer for window clerks and limits the potential spread of the virus at the retail counter.

The APWU was also instrumental in the Postal Service’s newest announced policy on “Liberal Changes of Schedule and Leave.” The letter instructs managers that they should be granting changes of schedule, annual leave, sick leave, and leave without pay (LWOP) to employees who have to miss work due to



COVID-19 pandemic related issues. The letter further clarifies that these absences are to be considered as “scheduled” leave and cannot be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule.

“We demand that the Postal Service address the serious safety and health needs that our members face every day,” Director Zimmerman said. “We will continue updating you when we have a new policy change negotiated.”

Reports from members in the field are essential to holding the Postal Service accountable to their safety responsibilities. If you observe a lack of supplies, a failure to conduct standup talks or other unsafe practices, notify your local officers. They will address issues to the national officers, who will in turn address postal management.

Continue to demand local management take this crisis seriously and take actions to protect you and your fellow coworkers. These conversations are crucial for the day-to-day protection of postal workers.

“Postal workers are a vital part of keeping our society moving during this crisis – unseen by anyone in a century,” President Dimondstein said. “It is important that postal workers come together to help each other. Please follow the recommended safety procedures, sound the alarm when management has not supplied the necessary equipment or implemented improved cleaning standards, and stay home if you are not feeling well. We are all in this together.”

New Pay Scales Available

The 2018-2021 Collective Bargaining Agreement interest arbitration award, issued March 10, granted three general wage increases in the contract. Two raises will be implemented retroactively, with a 1.3 percent increase effective Nov. 24, 2018, and a 1.1 percent raise effective since Nov. 23, 2019.

Effective Nov. 21, 2020 (PP25-20), the basic annual salary for each step shall be increased by 1.0 percent. Go to apwu.org/pay-information for the updated pay scales.