

October Sessions of Interest Arbitration Include Financial Arguments, PSE Panel, & Support Services

Union Defends Against Management's Proposals to Cut Wages and Benefits

This month the American Postal Workers Union and the United States Postal Service conducted two multi-day sessions of interest arbitration for a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA). The first was Oct. 10-11 and 15, and the second Oct. 21-23.

The primary focus of these sessions was wages, benefits, and the importance of the union contract to protect the skilled workers in the APWU bargaining unit from the low-wages and income inequality prevalent in the non-unionized private-sector.

“The hearings are proceeding well in our quest to win a new and good union contract,” said President Mark Dimondstein.

USPS Shows Contempt for Workers

One of the Postal Service's key witnesses was USPS Chief Operating Officer David E. Williams. Williams testified about the need for more “flexibility.” “Flexibility is a management code word for more non-career employees, less protections against lay-offs and subcontracting and undermining of seniority bidding rights for clearly defined preferred duty assignments,” as President Dimondstein explained in his Oct. 18 video to APWU members.

On Monday, Oct. 21, a USPS management witness characterized postal clerks as under-skilled and over-paid. The USPS is trying to justify their demand to expand the two-tier workforce, push down wages and abolish cost of living adjustments (COLAs). Another management witness made similar arguments to reduce health care, paid leave and retirement benefits.

APWU Fights Back

The APWU was ready to set the record straight for the three-person Arbitration Board. Labor economists presented evidence refuting the Postal Service's financial arguments and showed the impor-

tance of the union contract in protecting workers against the wage disparities in the private-sector.

An APWU expert witness presented a detailed job analysis showing postal workers are highly skilled, with positions that require intensive training and expertise in order to be done efficiently and safely. Another showed a true wage and benefit comparison between APWU bargaining unit employees and other skilled, unionized workers.

On Tuesday, Oct. 15, Support Services Director Steve Brooks highlighted the workers in the craft who are protected by the USPS/APWU Collective Bargaining Agreement.

In an earlier interest arbitration session, career panels spoke from Clerk Craft, Maintenance and MVS. On Oct. 22, arbitrators heard from Postal Support Employees about scheduling issues, the work they do, and their pride in the postal mission.

Clerk Craft Assistant Director (B) Lynn Pallas-Barber presented evidence supporting the union's proposals for guaranteed hours for PTFs, and more advanced scheduling for PSEs, with a clearer, faster conversion process.

Next Session Scheduled in November

“We are presenting a strong case to the panel—but we're not done yet,” said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. “We are working hard to prepare for the next arbitration sessions to not only finish our primary case, but to continue our rebuttal against the attacks the Postal Service has levied against us.”

The next interest arbitration session is currently scheduled for Nov. 13-15. The APWU encourages members to continue wearing *Good Contract NOW!* stickers and wristbands to show management across the country that we are united. If you need more, email nccc@apwu.org.



(L to R) PSEs Leah Rochon, Dominique Ballinger, David Dinnen, and Ericka Hobbs testifying to the Arbitration Board.