

APWU

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

William Burrus, President

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Rank-and-File Bargaining Committee Approves Tentative Contract Agreement *Union Members to Vote on Ratification*

APWU Web News Article #82-06, Dec. 7, 2006



(12/07/06) The APWU Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee voted unanimously to approve the union's tentative 2006 Collective Bargaining Agreement on Dec. 7 at a meeting in Washington DC. The agreement will be sent to union members for a ratification vote, which the committee will supervise.

The four-year tentative agreement provides for two wage increases and an upgrade for all APWU-represented employees, in addition to Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) twice per year.

It also provides for the elimination of part-time flexibles as a workforce category in large offices, no later than Dec. 1, 2007. All PTFs in offices of 200 man-years or more will be converted to full-time regular by that date. (See below for an explanation of "200 man-year offices.")

The Postal Service will pay 95 percent of healthcare premiums for employees enrolled in the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan; for workers enrolled in other health plans, the employees' share of premiums will increase 1 percent per year for four years, beginning in 2008.

Agreements specific to each craft (Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle Services, and Support Services) were negotiated as well.

"This agreement will make fundamental changes to postal employment because the American Postal Workers Union dared to challenge the past," Burrus said. "We refused to accept the premise that 'the way it has always been' is good enough.

"The result is that if the contract is ratified, all present and future APWU-represented employees will experience vastly improved wages, benefits, and conditions of employment. This is an excellent agreement that protects the rights and interests of postal workers as well as the American people," he said.

Burrus and other officers briefed the Rank-and-File Committee on Dec. 7; deliberations began immediately after.

"I am most pleased by the elimination of part-time flexibles from the workforce in 200 man-year offices," Burrus said. "That has been our objective for generations – and finally we have made significant progress. In 1993 all PTFs on the rolls were converted to regular, but, of course, when new hiring was done, PTFs were back in business. This time, PTFs will be converted and new hiring will be as full-time regulars.

"This is truly a major achievement," he said. "Of course, winning across-the-board upgrades is no small matter either."

Princella Vogel, chairperson of the Rank-and-File Committee, said, "We are making history with some of the innovations in this agreement – the elimination of part-time flexies in 200 man-year offices is a major, major accomplishment.

"We understood that we would have to make some sacrifices in health benefits, but we feel the overall package is a good one. We kept the 'No Layoff' clause, and we retained the COLAs. These were both very important."

A Long Road

"The collective bargaining process is expected to be controversial and difficult," Burrus said, "so APWU negotiators were not surprised that postal management was not immediately receptive to our bargaining demands. We have been able to work through our disagreements because we approached bargaining without consideration of what other postal unions may or may not achieve, and because we began to explore significant changes long before the opening of formal bargaining.

"Six months prior to the opening of negotiations, we requested that management consider changes on important issues. These advance discussions permitted postal officials to consider the affects certain changes would have on their ability to manage the Postal Service," the union president noted. "In the final analysis, they have agreed with the union that modifications are appropriate for the employees and the public we serve."

The Terms of the Agreement

The Four-Year Tentative Agreement Provides for the Following:

Wages, Upgrades, COLAs:

- There will be a 1.3 percent raise, effective Nov. 25, 2006;
- All APWU-represented employees will receive an upgrade of one level, effective Feb. 16, 2008, implemented by the adoption of a new pay scale;
- Transitional Employees (TEs) will be upgraded as well;
- There will be a 1.2 percent raise, effective Nov. 21, 2009;
- Cost-of-Living-Adjustments will be made in March and September each year, with a base index of July 2006;

Healthcare Premiums:

- The Postal Service will pay 95 percent of premiums for employees enrolled in the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan, effective in 2008;
- To be eligible, employees must have been members of a Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP) for a minimum of one year;
- Employees' share of healthcare premium costs will increase 1 percent each year for employees enrolled in other plans, in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011;

Workforce Issues:

- PTFs will be eliminated as a workforce category in offices of 200 man-years or more, effective Dec. 1, 2007;
- All Clerk Craft part-time flexible employees in offices of 200 man-years or more in the regular workforce will be converted to regular, no later than Dec. 1, 2007;
- Except for reporting periods 3 and 4 (December), the limit on the number of casual employees the Postal Service may hire within a district will be decreased from 15 percent to 6 percent of the total number of career employees in the district;
- The number of casuals that may be hired nationwide within the APWU bargaining unit will be increased from 5.9 percent to 6 percent;
- Except for reporting period 3 and 4, the number of casuals that may be employed within an installation in any reporting period shall not exceed 11 percent of the total number of Clerk Craft employees within that installation. (Previous contracts did not limit the number of casuals within an installation);
- Full-time regular Clerk Craft employees on the Overtime Desired List (ODL) will be given priority scheduling for overtime work over casuals doing overtime work;
- The total number of part-time regular employees shall not exceed 2.5 percent of the total number of employees in the Clerk, Maintenance, and Motor Vehicle Crafts;
- In offices of 200 man years or more in the regular work force, career Clerk Craft employees will have consecutive scheduled days off, unless otherwise agreed to by the local parties;
- In offices of 200 man years or more, casuals will not be assigned to Tour 2 unless there are no career Clerk Craft employees assigned to Tour 1 or Tour 3;
- Casuals in offices of 200 man-years or more will be limited to assignments that do not require training or testing;
- Casual employees will have a 360-day period of employment;
- Casual employment will not be considered "in lieu of full or part-time employees" in installations of 200 man-year or greater;
- Existing PTF maximization/conversion rules will remain unchanged for other crafts;
- The full-time to part-time ratio in the Motor Vehicle Craft will continue at the same percentage as exists on Nov. 20, 2006;

Retail Sales Task Force

- A task force will be convened to establish a Retail Sales Associate program in commercial establishments;
- The program will include the union providing lists of prospective workers to the Postal Service to perform retail sales in commercial establishments;
- The task force will begin meeting no later than Feb. 7, 2007, and conclude by May 1, 2007;

Uniform Allowances

- There will be a 2.5 percent increase in uniform and work clothes allowances in each year of the contract;

Leave, Holiday Provisions

- At the option of the local parties, the union may assume responsibility for the administration of scheduling overtime, choice vacation periods, and/or holiday work;
- APWU-represented employees will be automatically granted up to three days of leave (from annual leave, sick leave, or leave without pay) due to the death of a family member, with additional leave subject to normal leave provisions;
- Up to seven days of administrative leave per year may be granted for donations of bone marrow, stem cells, and blood platelets, with up to 30 days for organ donations;

Light/Limited Duty Assignments

- Management will give advance written notification to the local union president when it plans to reassign an ill or injured light- or limited-duty employee from a non-APWU-represented craft into an APWU-represented craft;
- The reassignment or re-employment of light- or limited-duty employees from other crafts to perform APWU bargaining unit work must be made in accordance with the provisions of Article 13 of the National Agreement;

Safety and Health

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) affirms that safe and healthful working conditions must be provided for postal employees who perform duties at non-postal facilities through engineering and administrative controls, personal protective equipment, enforcement of safe work practices, withdrawal of employees from the private-sector facility, and, if necessary, curtailment of mail;
- An implementation process will be created to ensure employees in offsite locations are protected by the Postal Service's safety and health program;

Local Implementation

- The parties agree to jointly develop a model "Local Memorandum of Understanding" within 90 days from effective date of agreement, which will be applied in those offices not covered by any LMOU because of the absence of a local union structure.

Miscellaneous Topics

- Social Security numbers will be removed from postal forms where the number is not necessary for processing;
- The parties agree to develop a means to provide for the electronic inspection and review of documents, files, and records necessary for processing grievances;
- When a decision has been made at the field level to subcontract bargaining unit work, the union at the local level will be given notification;
- Memoranda of Understanding were renewed or modified governing Deaf/Hard of Hearing; No Layoff Protection; Enhancing Career Opportunities for TEs; Crossing Craft Assignments; Annual Leave Exchange; Sick Leave for Dependent Care; Leave Sharing; PTF Reassignment Opportunities; Timeliness Regarding Step 2 Appeals; and Local Implementation

Details of the craft items will be posted soon, along with plans for the ratification process.

* Offices of 200 man years or more are determined by adding all paid hours for USPS career employees in crafts represented by the APWU, the National Association of Letter Carriers, and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and dividing by 2,080. If the result is 200 or more, the office qualifies as a 200 man-year office. The measure is based on the 12-months preceding the beginning of a new Collective Bargaining Agreement. The determination remains in effect throughout the life of the agreement. Paid hours include work hours, overtime, and leave. A list of 200 man-year offices for the 2006 agreement will be posted at www.apwu.org once it is received from the USPS.

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