

# Postal Worker West

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## Benefits and Leave To Be On Table?

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## **POSTAL SERVICE GEARING UP FOR CONTRACT TALKS**

Article 28 of the current contract applies provisions of the law (Chap 83 and 84 Title 5 US Code) to postal employees.

standard of comparability to private sector employees. The PMG's desired "Postal Health Plan" is supposed to incorporate participation in Medicare.

Article 10 of the current contract provides that management is to continue funding the current leave earning level during the duration of the CBA,

**Washington DC-** With less than nine (9) months before negotiations begin over a new contract, management is signaling probable targets for hard bargaining.

On the bargaining table will likely be health benefits, pay, leave, holidays and work flexibility.

The current collective bargaining agreement covering hours, wages and working conditions for over 200,000 postal workers expires on May 15, 2015. Contract talks usually begin 60 days before.

### **Revealing Their Hand**

The PMG has not made it a secret that he wants and plans on changing retirement and health benefits beyond seeking more worker contributions.

A recent "White Paper" offered insight on the thought process of USPS especially in light of management's mantra that USPS is financially deep in debt caused mainly because it is labor intensive.

Approximately 434,000 postal workers are under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) while about 50,000 fall under the old Civil Service Retirement System.

Although the White Paper requested by postal management makes it clear USPS does not have the authority to change retirement benefits for their employees, it included a strategy of sorts for union negotiations.

One such strategy is to openly communicate pension issues and costs with the unions so that negotiations are encouraged. "Good luck with management being transparent on anything," said Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. "Whether the bosses actually submit proposals to alter our plans remains to be seen. The point is that they are preparing."

However, management does have a current plot to change the retirement plan for new hires

### **Health Plans Targeted**

The PMG continues to claim -80% of total costs is for labor with 48% of that chalked up to federal benefits.

The PMG has also targeted employee Health Plans. Management acknowledges that in order to change the plans it requires union agreement so they want Congress to first impose a Postal Health Plan in 2015.

Management claims the current federal programs exceed the

The USPS Strategic Initiatives Plan openly calls for a Postal Health Plan. The proposals, to be submitted for contract talks, if not sooner, will reveal the full extent in which management is willing to go during negotiations. Usually management seeks increased employee contribution and will likely seek even more from workers in 2015.

### **Altered Leave Program**

Another "White Paper" recently released again points out management's claim that employee costs is the largest part of total expenses. [ However this paper reflects a more accurate percentage of 76 % not 80% which includes managerial pay too ]

This report requested by management targets Leave. Under current law USPS is required to offer benefits similar to those of the private sector. USPS provides leave benefits resembling the federal sector.

According to the paper the bosses cut annual leave and sick leave for non craft employees and executives but offers what are called Paid-Time-Off (PTO) programs.

Article 10 Sec 2 also provides that the Employee Labor Relations Manual Chap 510 remains in effect for the life of the contract.

PTOs, however, can reduce the number of days off allotted and eliminate categories of leave such as sick and annual leave. The "white paper" recognizes union negotiations on this matter would be difficult and will likely need a major trade off.

### **Internal Preparedness**

Thousands of postal workers expressed their disdain for the 2010 CBA which gave up \$3 billion in concessions to management.

So far the National Executive Board, except for a historic slide show, has not been given any indication of the Union's strategy, concepts or even what the Union will seek in contract talks.



**Ironically USPS does not usually live up to the Stamp issued years ago. Usually its all "conflict".**



# LIGHTS OUT *A Sinister Postal Plot*

The Pacific Area's Virtual Plant Lights Out is in actuality an effort to consolidate operations without calling it *consolidation*.

Lights Out appears to be a beneficial benevolent act to give postal workers relief with weekends off. The actual process is directly entwined with management's efforts to delay the delivery of mail to Americans which management calls "Load Leveling."

It is intended to eliminate night differential and Sunday premium and reduce staffing. Whether you work at a "gaining installation" or a "losing installation your work assignment and schedule will eventually be affected.

Currently management is obligated contractually to pay Out of Schedule pay for altering reporting times and SDOs. Eventually management's plot will lead to abolishments and staffing realignments. Light's Out is also intended to eliminate Overtime opportunities and eliminate Saturday mail delivery.

5 Day delivery will affect every occupation and craft adversely. Career clerk jobs will be eliminated in mail processing. As more delivery units are eliminated clerical retail work will also be lost. Maintenance employees will be shuffled as equipment utilization schedules are modified. The MVS craft will suffer as transportation needs are altered. PSEs will likely be let go as volume is deliberately reduced and major mailers by-pass postal mail processing plants.

**DO NOT DANCE IN THE POSTAL AISLES .... INSTEAD GET INVOLVED IN YOUR UNION'S EFFORTS TO FIGHT PRIVATIZATION AND THE ALTERATION OF DELIVERY STANDARDS. YOU WILL BE CALLED UPON TO RISE TO THE FIGHT.....WILL YOU ? [ LIGHTS OUT WILL SPREAD ]**

## Critical Issues Still Backlogged

WASHINGTON DC - Only about 5% of Union members file grievances. Most postal employees don't even realize what steps are involved in the grievance-arbitration procedures.

Grievances are filed over the violation, application and interpretation of the provisions of the CBA that cover hours, wages and working conditions which include work rules. On the work floor employees file grievances at Step 1 usually involving their Shop Steward and immediate supervisor. If not resolved the grievance is appealed to Step 2, then Step 3 and eventually to arbitration as deemed appropriate.

Contractually this process is suppose to take about 90 days. Why then do grievances take up to 1,825 days if not more to be adjudicated? The backlog is to blame! Managers take advantage of this delay and encourage issues to be appealed under the premise the grievance will take years to be heard. Others simply delay the process.

"The reality is thousands of grievances are settled at Step 2 locally and as many if not more are settled, dealt with or withdrawn at the Step 3

Level," reported Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez

Currently there are approximately 38,000 or so cases awaiting regional arbitration. However the scheduling of arbitration cases has been taken out of the Region's control. The National Union now controls the process under a joint venture with management called J-ASS (Joint Arbitration Scheduling System).

When the arbitration scheduling was being administered by the Regions the backlog was reduced from more than 100,000 cases to less than 20,000 or so cases. There are no known current plans on how to reduce the current backlog but the anticipation is local union presidents will insist on progressive action.

### National Issues Backlogged As Well

Precedent setting issues having a nationwide impact on work issues are appealed at the National Union level to Step 4 and arbitration. There are currently 256 backlogged cases of which the oldest goes back to 1996 and the most current was filed in May 2014.

The 2010 CBA provides for either party at HQ to advance two cases per craft per calendar year (and also to jointly agree to move more). Therefore only 6 or so national level cases for certain are heard per year.

Top Republican leaders are attempting to throw postal workers on the highway to become road kill even birds won't pick at.

GOP leaders want to take postal funds supposedly saved by eliminating a day of delivery and transfer that money to the depleted "Highway Trust Fund."

The House Speaker claims taking money from an allegedly broke postal service will benefit the service because it will give the PMG what he wants— 5 Day delivery! And our PMG is in agreement. "Our *mismanager* needs to be careful going to bed with wayward politicians who already want to dismantle America's Post Office," warned Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. "They may end up with some ugly babies," he quipped.

The plan calls for \$10.7 billion to be taken from USPS which the PMG claims is \$42 billion in the hole and give it to another agency that is slated to go bankrupt by summer. Even the Heritage Foundation (a conservative think tank has reportedly called the idea crazy.



## GOP PLANS TO MAKE P.O. ROADKILL

### But What Is The Highway Trust Fund?

"Next time you pump gas look around for a sticker that explains the taxes on gasoline. 18.3 cents of the price you pay goes into this Trust Fund," said Gonzalez. There are basically three accounts in that trust (road construction, mass transit and leaking storage). It is going broke while USPS made

an operational profit of \$1.4 billion that management reports as a \$2.6 billion loss.

"The Highway Fund was established in 1956. The Post Office on the other hand was established in 1775," Coordinator Gonzalez told radio personality Rick Smith. "The only roads postal money should go to are post roads," he added.

### Political False Claims

Republican leaders claim taking postal money after cutting delivery services will save Congress from bailing out the postal service in the future. "This is what Benjamin Franklin would have called *poppy cock*," said Gonzalez. Republicans are, unfortunately, using the White House Budget plan calling for 5 day delivery as a political ploy to further dismantle the Post Office and seemingly the PMG is for it. **CALL YOUR CONGRESS REP @ (202) 224-3121 TO OPPOSE THIS!**

## Alert Issued On Injured Worker Issues

The Director of Human Relations has issued alerts over a pending EEO Settlement titled **Pittman v. Donahoe** involving a class action litigation settlement of more than \$17 million.

Affected employees involved in the class action disability EEO case (wherein management restricted the duty hours of permanent rehab assignments from March 2000 to December 2012) were sent claim forms due June 19th. Although the Union cannot give advice on signing or not signing the form, employees are informed that signing the claim form may restrict the ability to get monetary relief or

reinstatement in other forums including MSPB and even grievances.

The Pittman case is not to be confused with the **McConnell v Donahoe** case which covers claims over management's discrimination made under NRP Phase 2 when workers were sent home claiming there was no work available. (McConnell is still pending.)

Information indicates the HQ Industrial Relations Dept. is suppose to issue further instructions on grievance appeals related to Pittman which differ from NRP issues.

**For more on Pittman visit:**  
[www.pittmanclass.com](http://www.pittmanclass.com)

## Pacific Area seeks to eliminate several hundred jobs

**San Diego, CA-** Area management has issued a list of several hundred vacancies they intend on reverting.

In addition to the 707 vacancies placed on withholding, Area bosses have targeted 253 extra residual vacancies for reversion (elimination).

Capitalizing on an obscure 2011 MOU and recent PSE Conversion MOU the Area seeks agreement from the Region to revert these jobs. Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez is opposed to the reversion of the assignments especially if OT is being worked in the sections and PSE are performing the work.

"Instead of eliminating jobs the bosses need to retreat excessed workers back to their installations and convert PSEs to career status," said Regional Coordinator Gonzalez.

The Region has requested the assistance of Locals in validating the need for the assignments so as not to rely on management data which can be flawed. "One of the things I dislike about this process is locals cannot grieve issues," lamented Gonzalez referring to the informal process for appeals imposed by the National HQ parties.

## Western Area Claims No Residuals Reverted

**Denver, CO-** Area management has advised the Region that Districts on the west side of the Western Area do not intend to revert residual vacancies or withheld residuals.

This disposition was as a result of the Regional Coordinator protesting unilateral reversion of vacancies by District managers as reported by several locals.

"This may seem like good news for now, but I

caution each Local Union to ardently police their bids, residuals and 21 day eReassign results," warned Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

Wayward managers and postmasters have been known to unilaterally decide to eliminate jobs. These jobs are need to allow for many opportunities including landing spots for excessed employees, proper staffing and for eventual conversion of the non-career workforce. The CBA requires local notice of continued withholding and reversions. Locals should report reversions to the Regional Office.



## A MILLIONAIRE FOR ONE DAY ( OR HOW WE CRASHED THE STAPLES STOCK HOLDER MEETING )

Coordinator Omar Gonzalez

**Palo Alto, CA-** For 17 brief minutes I was a holder of \$1,964,424 worth of Staples stock which gained me, and others unionists, entrance to the annual Staples Stock Holder meeting attended by multi millionaires and their corporate elites.

While postal protestors chanted outside the meeting room, which clearly perturbed the multi millionaires, we took the opportunity to challenge the election of a realtor who represents the company selling off Post Offices to their own clients.

There are several hundred post offices within a two mile radius of Staples stores. We challenged Staples placing an official of CBRE Realtors on their Board while they have contracted with the Postmaster General to place post offices in Staples stores. Of course our protest fell were dismissed.

We also tried to secure a resolution calling on Staples to study

the human impact on postal workers with their corporate actions of contracting to provide postal services in Staples stores. The resolution failed by proxy vote of the Stockholders but we did receive several thousand votes of support.

### WHY WE DID IT

Working with the AFL-CIO (federation of unions) we wanted to make our presence known to the corporate elites. We wanted, and did, send a message that the US Mail Is Not For Sale!

We did it to protect the security and sanctity of the US Mail and to protect our postal employment. We did it for the Post Office that belongs to the people of the United States.

I met the CEO of Staples, who's salary and stock options provide him with an annual income of \$10,400,000. I wanted him to know (from a millionaire for a day to a multi-millionaire) that the representatives of the American Postal Workers Union were in the room fighting for decent middle class jobs, fighting for the Post Office of the People, and fighting against the corporate greed that is undermining the very fabric of these United States.

### DON'T BUY AT STAPLES!



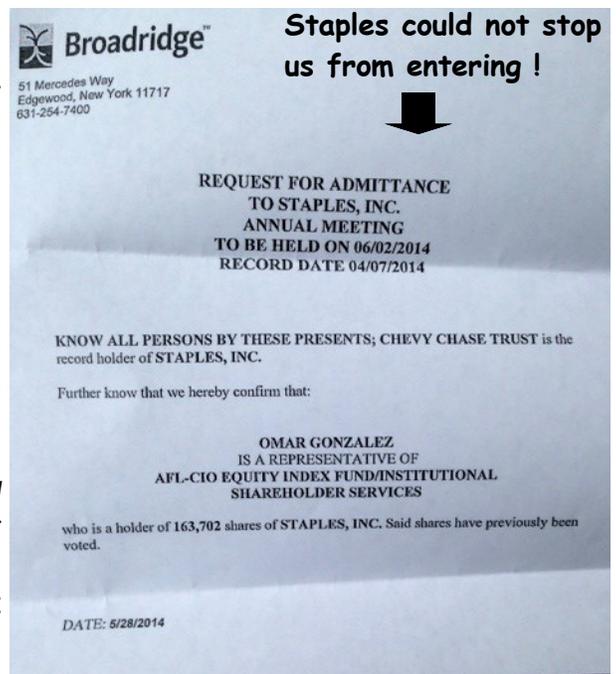
Postal activists, local union leaders and Stamford Students protested the Staples Stock Holder Meeting. Their chants of "The U.S. Mail Is Not For Sale" disturbed the corporate elites

### STAPLES WORKERS SNITCH ON BOSS'S CONTEMPT

In a letter sent to the Western Region Office workers employed by Staples reported their boss, Shira Goodman, called a Town Hall Meeting and when the Staples workers asked her a question about the postal worker Staples protests Goodman responded, "It must be nice to have a job for life!". (referencing the postal union contract protections against lay-offs).

Goodman then added... "those days are over, this country can't afford to do business as usual". "She was referring to postal workers and their benefits," said Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

The Staples workers applauded the efforts of postal workers for doing what they are not able to do- **speak out!** They asked us o keep it up!



### Where Were U?



TOO MANY POSTAL WORKERS FAIL TO SEE JUST HOW MUCH THEIR JOB IS ON THE LINE AND REFUSE TO INVEST A HOUR OF THEIR TIME TO FIGHT AGAINST THE STAPLES PRIVATIZATION PLAN! There should be 100 or more protestors in the picture to the left. When your job is eliminated- IT'LL BE TOO DAMN LATE!



Happy Independence Day