

The Local Line

“A PPA Award Winning Publication”

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

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More Conversions!

We were notified on 6-24-2021 that more PSEs will be converted to career at all 3 plants, effective 7-31-2021. Management is converting above the authorized complement at each facility. **Palatine** will convert 59 PSES to career, 22 due to being under complement and an additional 37 conversions. **Carol Stream** will convert 41 PSEs to career, 17 due to being under complement and an additional 24 conversions. **Busse** will convert 33 PSEs to career, 22 due to being under complement and an additional 5 conversions. After many years of USPS running plants with not enough Clerks they have decided to add more Clerks. They are also increasing Mailhandlers. Someone at the Headquarters level has made the decision to properly staff the plants. Until recently local management has been reverting vacant jobs based on headquarters telling them that they were over complement. At the same time management was calling massive amounts of overtime to get the mail out.

No AO Conversions...

While it is good that management is increasing the Clerk complement at the plants they are still under-staffing Clerks at the Associate Offices. Most offices can't afford to have a Clerk call in without using Carriers to sort and scan the parcels. Due to the COVID leave more Clerks are off and this means the remaining Clerks are being told they have to work forced OT. FT Clerks on and off the ODL at the Wheaton Post Office are being forced to work Sundays because the office has no PSEs. The newly hired PSE at Buffalo Grove is working 60+ hours per week, and this after it took the Postmaster forever to hire a PSE because no one wanted to take the job. The PSE they have is a conscientious worker but management is burning her out very quickly. One PSE is not enough! The Retail Window is invariably short-staffed, creating long lines for the customers. USPS is a service organization and our service has suffered. Clerks are needed in the AO's so the mail gets out and customers do not have a long wait in line.

USPS Letter on new Juneteenth Holiday

“President Biden signed into law the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act on June 17, 2021, making June 19 a federal holiday. This new holiday commemorates the final end to slavery in the United States and the Postal Service is fully supportive of annually observing and setting aside a day to recognize this historic event. We are part of the nation's critical infrastructure and our customers are relying on us to deliver our essential services... For that reason, the Postal Service will be operating on June 18 and 19, 2021, on a normal schedule, serving our customers to the best of our ability... The Postal Service will discuss future recognition of this significant new holiday with our national Unions, Management Associations, and other stakeholders, consistent with our collective bargaining and consultative obligations under Title 39. Once those discussions take place, we will update you on appropriate developments, but we reiterate that we are fully supportive of this important national holiday.”

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Special points of interest:

More Conversions!
No AO Conversions...
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Juneteenth Holiday
FEEL
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Unencumbered not bidding
NWIAL Scholarships 2021
In Transition...

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EFEL

On 5-7-2021 APWU Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman wrote a letter to the Acting Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requesting guidance on the interpretation of certain guidelines for Emergency Federal Employment Leave (EFEL). Since the release of the OPM guidelines on 4-20-2021, postal management has made overly restrictive interpretations of when EFEL can be used by postal employees. In his letter he asked whether the USPS would be mandated to provide EFEL to employees to receive and recover from COVID-19 vaccinations or if OPM would provide management the discretion to decide whether this leave is offered. He also asked for clarification on whether tour 1 and tour 3 workers with child care responsibilities would be able to use EFEL to cover night shift hours, so they are able to sleep at night and care for their child during the day. USPS has taken the position that only employees working the day shift are entitled to EFEL for helping their children with remote schooling. OPM is working on an official response to Director Zimmerman. In the meantime, file a grievance for denied EFEL for childcare. The parent/employee cannot work all night and be available to help their child with remote learning during the day time hours unless they go without any sleep. We are filing grievances for denied EFEL and/or employees not being paid, but are also taking these problems to the plant manager who has the authority to approve the EFEL. As of 6-21-2021 USPS employees have been paid 2,732,933 hours at a cost of \$71,414,889.00. The hours paid to employees for all government agencies including the USPS is 2,897,761 hours at a cost of \$76,874,629.00.

Scheduled v. Unscheduled

On 9-6-2002 management informed us that they would no longer honor past agreements on scheduled v. unscheduled leave. We filed a grievance on the unilateral change and prevailed on 4-17-2006 when management agreed prior to the hearing to rescind the management letter. The pre-arb settlement reaffirmed the scheduled v unscheduled agreements in place at Palatine. ***"It is mutually agreed that if an employee calls in for leave of 16 hours or more, the first 8 hours shall be unscheduled and remainder shall be considered scheduled leave. This does not negate management's right to require proper verification per the ELM 513"***. ***"Furthermore, consistent with past practice, in those instances where an employee provides acceptable medical documentation for an absence at least one (1) hour prior to the employee's scheduled starting time, the absence will be recorded as scheduled leave. Consistent with past practice and the national level decisions in Case # H1C-3T-C 40742 and Case # H4C-3A-C 6934, faxed medicals are acceptable subject to verification on a case-by-case basis."*** A few of our members know about this agreement but many do not. If you need to be off work, you can get the leave scheduled if you call in and fax in a medical prior to the start of the leave. Most of the supervisors do not know about this agreement either but we have copies of the pre-arb settlement they must comply with. Do not call in day by day as each time you pick up the phone it's another unscheduled absence. We can use the 1983 Management Instruction at other offices for employees who call in and fax in a medical prior to the start of the leave to change the leave to scheduled leave.

Unencumbered not bidding

Since the last floor letter I was asked to put something in the floor letter informing any unencumbered Clerks that they can be placed into residual vacancies if they do not submit bids on posted vacancies. Residual vacancies are bids that were posted and nobody bid on, so they are usually not desirable bids. Most are not going to bid on a terrible schedule and will probably wait for something better, but you could be placed.

NWIAL Scholarships 2021

Chief Trustee Ray Wience reports that we will be holding the drawing for four \$1,000.00 scholarships at the August meeting on 8-8-2021. To apply fill out the form and return to Ray prior to the 2:30 start of the August meeting. Once again, Ray will ask members at the meeting to pull the winners from the "Bozo" drum. All information is on the back of the scholarship forms which are available at your union office.

In Transition...

More employees are retiring every month and we are giving out a watch to every NWIAL member who retires so let us know that you are going so we can get your watch to you before you are gone. The workforce is becoming younger as the older employees continue to retire and PSEs continue to be converted to career. Many of our most knowledgeable stewards have retired in the last few years. We continue to solicit where we need Stewards but in some cases do not get applicants. We have a good contract but it must be enforced and that is what the Local Union and Stewards do. If you see a solicitation on your tour for a Steward consider stepping up as most of our Stewards find the work to be rewarding. Welcome new Carol Stream T2 Maintenance Stewards Gary LaDolce and Anthony Pritchett.