

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

Trump and USPS

President Trump has been able to do many of the things that the rest of the politicians in his party were unable to do and they are happy to allow him to get them done. They wanted to get rid of or gut the Affordable Health Care Act and to pass a big tax cut for the 1% and corporations. Trump has done what they could not because he has the strong support of most of their voters. People voted for him because they no longer believed the politicians were listening to them. Trump had money and was financed by small donations like Sanders. He promised to drain the swamp but did not and the swamp is now his. How does this affect us? Aside from the supreme court, climate change, a country run by and for the rich and big corporations, the list goes on, it has to do with what he plans to do to the United States Postal Service, our reliable employer. He wants to privatize and we have heard this from the politicians from his party before, but Trump does what they have failed to do.

President's Task Force

(Per Postalreporter.com)
The President's Task Force on the USPS will make recommendations on "reforms" in August. It comes as no surprise that the result of Trump's task force reform plan is to privatize the USPS. This would allow USPS to follow private sector practice in compensation and labor relations and opt out of federal benefit programs which we now participate in such as the Federal Employee Benefit Health plan and the Federal Employee Government Life Insurance. USPS privatization through an initial public offering (IPO) or sale to another entity would require the implementation of significant reforms prior to the sale to show a possible path to profits. Most foreign post offices that have been privatized have been profitable at the time of sale while they say USPS has lost 65 billion since 2008. That figure is misleading as \$50 billion is for pre-funding retiree health care benefits 75 years into the future per the 2008 Postal Enhancement and Accountability Act which crippled the USPS.

To reach profitability they say USPS would have to restructure and reduce the workforce and services. They say the existing unfunded liabilities in USPS retirement programs total more than \$100 billion and that USPS owes an additional \$15 billion to Treasury's Federal Financing Bank and also has liabilities to the Department of Labor's Workers Compensation program. According to USPS own estimates, the Agency is insolvent with liabilities exceeding assets by more than \$120 billion. In some cases foreign governments have absorbed legacy retirement liabilities in order to sell their post offices. **This is not a Done Deal!** Any plan to privatize the USPS would have to pass the House and Senate. Trump would sign a bill to privatize but it would have to pass the congress first. We have said it for years, but the time has now come when USPS is under the real threat of privatization. If that happens it won't matter to him if you voted for him or not, your job will be gone just like that. We will have to do whatever we can to stop any privatization plans from being passed into law.

Floor Edition

July 5, 2018

Jackie Engelhart
President
Walter Elerby Jr.
Vice President
Alan Czerwinski
News Director

Special points of interest:

Trump and USPS
President's Task Force
This is not a Done Deal!
APWU Drops R1399 Disputes
National Level Disputes...
National APWU Disappointing

Northwest Illinois Area Local
American Postal Workers Union
194 W. Lake Street
Elmhurst, IL 60126
Phone: 630-833-0088
Fax: 630-833-0248
Email: nwial7140@yahoo.com
Web: nwial7140ayahoo.com

APWU Drops RI-399 Disputes

Most of our newer members have probably never heard of RI-399, which is Regional Instruction 399 but stands for a whole lot more. It is a very old document (1978) containing guidelines which are used by the Postal Service to determine which craft, Clerks or Mailhandlers should perform work in mail processing facilities. These guidelines were to be used to establish positions and make assignments between these crafts. Clerks were identified as the primary craft to perform distribution. The RI-399 is even found in the back of the Mailhandler contract.

Distribution is defined in the USPS M-32 handbook as follows: *"A sortation of mail to ADC's states, sectional centers, cities, foreign countries, branches, carrier routes, hold outs (for example, firms, addresses, institutions, boxes) box sections, ZIP codes, uncoded mail, Nixie, APO, FPO, or similar separations. Any sortation by size, shape, weight, class, or facing of mail is not distribution."* Mailhandlers were identified as the primary craft to perform the functions, which are ancillary to the Clerk activities, such as culling and transporting of the mail. For Clerks in the plants there has been no bigger threat to our work than the USPS giving Clerk work to the Mailhandler Craft and the MH Union always trying to take our work nationally and locally. Think of the Low Cost Tray Sorters for distribution of tubs/trays, or the Incoming Parcel Post unit which they tried to claim at Carol Stream and Palatine although the RI-399 says this is Clerk work. For some reason USPS gives Clerk work to the Mailhandlers. I don't know if its because they are level 4 and Clerks are level 6, or if its because of penalty V pay, but with all the OT called for MHs the USPS can't be saving money.

National Level Disputes...

Most of the national level craft jurisdictional disputes were filed by APWU after USPS gave most of the work on the AFSM-AI and FSS to Mailhandlers with Clerks retaining very few Flatsorter jobs. When I started in 1976 Clerks had most of the work, we keyed letters on the LSM, we keyed flats on Flatsorter (881s), and still worked mail in the manual units on the belts, in the cases, and in the tub-pack and traypack units where trays were distributed by zip to containers for dispatch. When the LSMs were replaced by OCRs and DBCS machines the Mailhandler Union at the national level filed a dispute saying this was MH work. This dispute file by the MH union went to arbitration and the work was retained by the Clerk craft. The MH position was that the OCR machine was performing the distribution, not the Clerk, and it was a feeding sweeping operation. Automated distribution of letters in the OCR and DBCS was Clerk. The AFSM automated the sorting of Flats and work on the AFSM was assigned to the Clerk craft. On the mechanized 881 Flatsorter the Clerk prepped the mail on the machine so there were no MHs. USPS created a prepping unit for the AFSM and assigned it to MHs who removed plastic from bundles and placed the mail into the carts. With the addition of Automatic Induction on the AFSM feeders USPS combined prepping and feeding on the machine and assigned it to MHs. Clerks retained the feed station and sweeping, but at Palatine they added the ATHS, Automatic Tray Handling System which pushed the tubs out automatically and replaced the Clerk. CS never got the ATHS and did not lose as much work on AFSM. Most work on the FSS was assigned to MHs as prepping but it was really prepping and feeding.

National APWU Disappointing

The APPS (Automated Package Sorting System) replaced the SPBS machine in 2004 and local disputes were filed at Busse and Palatine to be held pending the national dispute. Palatine lost the APPS in 2007 and got it back in 2017 and the dispute sat there. We call RI-399 the "black hole" because when you file a dispute it just sits there because the USPS and the other Union do not want to change the craft assignments. When these disputes are arbitrated the moving party usually loses as the arbitrator agrees with USPS. I guess this is why the APWU at the national level decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to withdraw most of the disputes filed before 9-11-2017 unless craft jurisdiction was in consistent with the RI-399. I do not agree with this action because it does not benefit our members. It only benefits the MH Union and the USPS for taking Clerk work. If you are a PSE and want to know why MHAs get turned over faster it is because USPS has used operational changes or new work to transfer Clerk work to the MHs. I called National Assistant Clerk Craft Director Lynn Pallas-Barber to tell her what I thought of this. She said "We didn't think you would be happy" and I said "Do you think I am the only one?" Our members have a right to be informed, good, bad or otherwise. In my opinion this was bad for APWU and good for the others. USPS gets to give Clerk work to the MHs and years later APWU signs a document in agreement. I am disappointed in our national President, Mark Dimondstein for signing this and in Lynn Pallas for helping to negotiate a total surrender in the fight for Clerk work. The only good point is that work formerly performed by MHs in the AO's is agreed to be Clerk work.

