

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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Where are the Chairs?
I have been asking Carol Stream Plant Manager Pam Bronson to replace the old, worn, dilapidated chairs in Manual Letters. She said they should be using leaners instead of chairs, which I have not seen on the workroom floor in years. I was told she sent people to Rockford to get some old leaners and put them in Manual Letters, then removed most of the chairs. What is the message she is sending? I think the Clerks as well as the Union get her message loud and clear. They understand and unfortunately so do I. I also asked Palatine Plant Manager Allen Mitchell about buying new chairs for Letters and he said "yes". We will follow up with Mr. Mitchell but at least he did not go to Rockford to find some nasty old leaners to send a message to Clerks / APWU for having the audacity to ask for new chairs. The CS Plant Manager could take \$\$\$ out of the funds for Employee Appreciation Day due to a lack of participation by the CS employees.

Who wants a free hot dog when the Plant Manager refuses to provide a decent chair for you to sit in while working in Letters? This reflects a negative attitude towards Clerks in Letters and Nixie as they are manual and not as productive as machines. Letters and Nixie are also the units where most injured Clerks are assigned. CS management moved an injured Clerk off of tour 2 although s/he had the seniority to be on T2. To me, this looks like punishment/retaliation. I was at CS on 4-27-22 and saw a Safety poster in the lobby which said: "A safe and healthy workplace not only protects workers from injury and illness, it can also lower injury, illness costs, reduce absenteeism, and turnover, increase productivity and quality, and raise employee morale. In other words, safety is good for business. Plus, protecting workers is the right thing to do." I told Pam no other organization but the USPS would have their employees sit in old ergonomically challenged chairs for hours per day to work. It is not right. A grievance has been filed.

What's with the Nixie "Workbench"?

This is another CS issue. For some reason, I have no idea why, and have no response to my question from the Plant Manager, management placed an old unfinished work bench in the Nixie unit for the Review Clerk to work at. This looks like something out of an old workshop and is both ergonomically and spatially challenged. The Review Clerk states she has to find a chair that adjusts to the height of this bench and then has little room to work as the table top is small compared to the regular table. Why would you require the Review Clerk to sit at this uncomfortable bench where there is not enough room to work instead of allowing her to work at the regular nixie tables? There is no good reason and if there is, no one in management has told me. The Review Clerk said "They are trying to get me to retire." The Union has filed a grievance for a violation of safety and health. I'd like to see senior management sitting in the old chairs or using an old work bench for their desk. Ergonomics was once a big deal but no more...

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Special points of interest:

Where are the Chairs?
What's with the Nixie "workbench"?
APWU Organizing Drive
Retiree Health Benefits
Palatine Grievance Update
USPS Face Covering Policy

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APWU Organizing Drive

From President Dimonstein

“Building on the outstanding new union contract and historic postal reform legislation, the APWU is launching a national organizing campaign which will run from May 1st to July 1st of 2022.

80% of our bargaining unit belongs to APWU, yet there are too many freeloaders who receive the benefits of unionization but refuse to pay their fair share. We have goal of signing up 5,000 new members during this drive.”

President Dimonstein is right, we have too many freeloaders, who take advantage of the good pay and benefits but refusing to pay. They know how to contact the union to file a grievance but when you ask them to join the Union, they say I'll think about it. Our Local has a monetary incentive for new members and the organizer who signs up the new member. The Organizer gets \$25 and the new Member gets \$25 for joining. Most APWU members sign up in Orientation before they start working at the Post Office and it is well worth it to have a Union, instead of being at the mercy of the Employer, like most people. The pay and benefits of a Union job vs. a non-union job is worth it! Most non-members would not be at the USPS if they got paid and treated as a non-union employee. Some non-members are hard core, they refuse to pay dues. One is the senior Clerk at her installation. All those years of good union pay and benefits and they won't pay a dime, they let the rest of us pay. To me, having a Union has always been worth it because of the job security. Unless you get falsely accused of a threatening someone, it is hard to get fired by the USPS. You can get terminated on your probation because you do not have rights to the grievance procedure. Otherwise, you have union rights.

Retiree Health Benefits

This information regards changes to retiree health benefits as a result of Postal Reform Legislation. Postal employees will be able to keep their FEHBP into retirement. Starting on 1-1-2025, health coverage for future retirees, when eligible at age 65, will be a combination of Medicare and FEHBP. Enrollment in Medicare A and B will be required. Under the legislation, postal employees and annuitants will continue to take part in a restructured FEHBP program which will include all of the major insurance companies, including Blue Cross Blue Shield. While the benefits would remain the same, any increase in premium would be reduced because postal participants would be placed in a separate risk pool with new rules related to Medicare enrollment. Active employees under the age of 64 as of 1-1-2025, would when both retired and at least age 65, enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. Currently, around 90% of postal annuitants enroll in Medicare Part A hospital services and around 80% are voluntarily enrolled in Medicare Part B medical services. While there are no premiums for Medicare Part A, the standard monthly premium for Part B in 2022 is \$170.00 per month, a figure that is set each year. The reason most Medicare eligible annuitants already choose to enroll in Medicare Parts A & B when they turn 65 is because doing so virtually eliminates any out of pocket health care costs (deductibles and co-pays) under the FEHBP. The reason it makes sense to create postal only plans within FEHBP and to maximize Medicare participation is that it will reduce health care costs for both USPS and the employee. Because Medicare is the first-payer insurance for its enrollees, the costs covered by postal-only FEHBP plans will be

reduced, thereby reducing costs for postal employees. This would also reduce USPS health care expenses by hundreds of millions of dollars annually and reduce its future liability for retiree health benefits by approximately \$40 billion dollars.

Palatine Grievance Update

600 CCD Marcia Lloyd and VP Dave Baskin worked with Labor Relations over the past 5 months to finalize the grievances filed at Palatine for management working Mail Processing Assistants in 2020 without maxing out the Clerks. Clerks on the 4th quarter 2020 ODL will be compensated. The senior Clerks will each get \$975 while those who were former PSEs will receive \$632. Out of fairness, the 3-4 PSEs who had the same hire date as the most junior career employee, but missed the conversion cut to be career in 2020 were also included. The money will be paid in the 4-29 and 5-13-2022 pay checks.

USPS Face Covering Policy

USPS Letter dated 3-29-2022 states *“With the number of confirmed COVID cases continuing to decline across the county, state, local and jurisdictions have revised their pandemic mitigation measures and have stopped their mandatory face covering policies and social distancing practices. The USPS has decided to align with these national changes. Effective immediately, the USPS will no longer require any postal employee to wear a face covering while at work. All previous USPS face covering policies are rescinded. Employees may continue to voluntarily wear a mask or face covering if they are so inclined. USPS will remain diligent and continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will make modifications to this policy. The USPS will continue to provide face coverings for anyone who asks one.”*