



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

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National Postal Mail Handlers Union

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Dear Members,

You may have noticed a new cooperative spirit between the NPMHU and the other Postal Unions, especially on those topics where we can and should join forces because our interests coincide. One product of that cooperation has been the issuance of a joint statement by all four postal unions, which represents a postal union alliance on certain topics and approaches. It was signed recently by all four Presidents and posted on our web site. The idea is to show that we are united, to engage the public, and to keep the conversation moving in the right direction. Please take the time to read the proclamation, which is published in its entirety later in this magazine.

Basically, what the proclamation says is that we stand united for a public postal service, for the enhancement and expansion of postal services, and for the protection of good union jobs in our communities. We stand with the people of our country in defense of their right to a universal postal service operated in the public interest.

Another area of cooperation is the NPMHU's willingness to support the "Stop Staples Campaign." The Mail Handlers Union has joined with the APWU in this important endeavor. Unlike prior efforts to sell stamps and provide postal retail services to customers through grocery stores or at kiosks or online, which generally represent useful and cost-free ways of making simple postal services more accessible to the largest possible number of Americans, the Staples pilot project is different in kind and in degree. Most critically, the deal between the Postal Service and Staples allows non-union, minimum wage employees with few benefits to sell the full range of postal services,



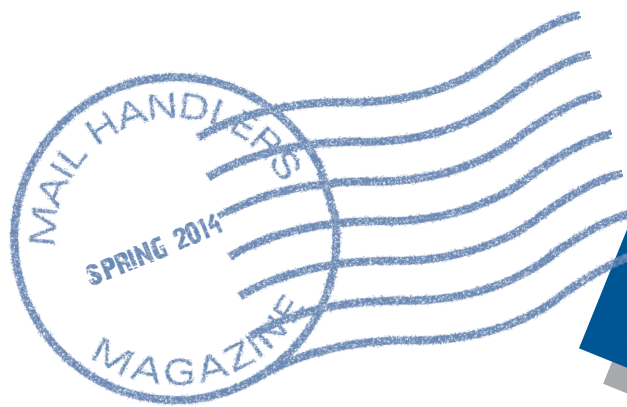
JOHN F. HEGARTY, National President

without any protection or security for the mail and without any concern for the good, middle-class postal jobs that may disappear as a result. The Mail Handlers Union understands that technology has changed, and will continue to change the Postal Service and the jobs of mail handlers and other postal employees. But there is no reason to combine those changes with the bottom-feeding that is represented by Mitt Romney and his hedge fund's buy-out of Staples, or Sam Walton and his billionaire children who lead Wal-Mart, or that one-eyed dog that seems to run Target. Indeed, it is my understanding that under the contract with Staples, the letters or packages left with Staples employees is not even considered "mail" until it is handed over to the Postal Service for processing. So Staples employees could rifle through these letters or packages, or could delay their processing, or could do whatever else they may want without many repercussions and without the protection of federal statutes guaranteeing the safety and security of the mail.

On April 24, 2014, there was a "national day of action" held to protest the Staples deal. As part of that day of action, an anti-Staples and anti-privatization rally was held at the main Staples store on L Street in downtown Washington, DC, a few blocks from our national headquarters. I spoke out on behalf of the Mail Handlers Union against the senseless privatization of public postal services.

Turning to the subject of USPS finances, the Postal Service continues to plead poverty, but actually it is making a profit. Without considering the retiree health benefit fund payments that everyone knows will not be made, the

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Postal Service ran an operational surplus last year of several hundred millions, and this year that surplus already is over \$1 billion. Why postal management continues to report “losses” and feed into “the sky is falling” mentality has to do with politics and accounting standards and does not reflect financial reality. Even worse, the constant chatter about how the Postal Service may not be able to survive recent financial struggles actually drives mail away from the Postal Service; if management would actually report honestly and positively, perhaps major mailers, advertisers, on-line merchants, and other customers would increase their volumes. Combine that with the security of the mail – far better than the cyber-insecurity of email and the internet— and the U.S. mail could make a comeback of historic proportions.

In a bit of good news, most of the closings and consolidations that were planned for February 2014 are on hold, for now. A notice was posted in the Federal Register towards the end of January 2014, postponing the service standard changes that were to take effect on February 1. If and when the USPS decides to move forward, it will have to post another notice in the Federal Register at least 90 days in advance of any change. There is no telling when, or if, the Postal Service will do this, but indications are that the current moratorium should last for at least two years (that could change, however, so stay tuned).

To give a little bit of history, back in 2005 there were 675 mail processing facilities. Granted not all of those employed mail handlers, but many

of them did. By 2008, the Postal Service was down to 614 facilities, at which point the real cuts started, greatly affecting mail handlers across the country.

Here are the actual numbers: in 2009, the Postal Service reduced to 599 facilities; in 2010, 528 facilities; in 2011, 461 facilities; in 2012, 417 facilities; and finally in 2013, down to 320 facilities, which is where the Postal Service is today. The service standard changes that recently have been put on hold would have implemented a plan to get down to 250 facilities, but that would require a severe, and in our view unjustifiable, reduction in overnight processing and delivery standards.

The Postal Service can hardly process the mail now with 320 facilities, so how will it cope with only 250? The package business is booming, so why would any manager cut more facilities? It makes no sense, but then no one has ever accused USPS management of acting rationally. The Mail Handlers Union and other postal stakeholders have fully explained this situation to Congress. Let's just hope that our elected representatives are paying attention.

That's my update for now, Brothers and Sisters.

Until the next time, I remain,

Yours in Solidarity,
John F. Hegarty
National President

“The Postal Service continues to plead poverty, but actually it is making a profit.”