



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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BUY UNION IN 2014



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As we begin a new calendar year, many will partake in the custom of making a New Year's resolution. Some will declare that this is the year they will lose weight; others will commit to stop smoking. Maybe you will pledge to reduce stress, save money or take that bucket list trip. The neighborhood gym will be overrun with those hoping to kick off the New Year feeling better about their health. Others will vow to volunteer their time to a charity or get better organized? Presumably, your resolution will seek to improve your overall well-being with a fresh start of sorts or will employ a commitment to help others in some way.

With that spirit, the NPMHU proposes a New Year's resolution to express your Union solidarity – **BUY UNION MADE PRODUCTS IN 2014.** We encourage all members, family and friends to join in our resolve to support organized labor by seeking out and purchasing products and services made at the hands of, or provided by, a fellow Union laborer. With consideration to our fragile economy and tumultuous labor climate, we hope you will make a conscious decision to spend your Union wages on Union-made goods. When you Buy Union, you ensure that your

hard earned money is being used to make purchases of quality goods and services.

Have you ever traveled the aisles of your neighborhood grocery or department store filling your cart, wondering which product is Union made? The choices are vast. Whether you are purchasing everyday items such food and clothing, household necessities, or making a larger purchase such as an appliance or automobile, you do have the opportunity to buy Union made merchandise. Union products and services are symbols of quality and fair pay and are found everywhere, from washing machines to baked goods, from shoes to beer, from clothing to pet food. They are evidence of quality goods and services produced by proud American workers.

The NPMHU is calling on all members to spend wisely and embrace a New Year's resolution to support Unions by purchasing Union made products. It's a win-win arrangement for everyone – labor, management, consumers, and the community, where the economy benefits from the paychecks and taxes of well-paid workers. So, look for the Union label whenever and wherever you can! To support the American

labor movement, be sure to ask yourself the following questions when you shop: Do you look for the Union label? Do you try to buy or order "Made in the USA" products when you are making purchases? Do you attempt to have your deliveries made by way of the USPS? Think about it. Would you want your friends and family, or your coworkers, or even people you do not know, to be using non-union means of communication when they could be using the U.S. Mail?

The Union Label and Service Trades Department of the AFL-CIO was created to promote the products and services produced in America by union members. The AFL-CIO also maintains and publishes a "Don't Buy" list of companies being boycotted and the products and services involved; you can access that list at the AFL-CIO sponsored website www.unionlabel.org. In addition, the NPMHU maintains a link on our home page at www.npmhu.org entitled *Buy Union – Buy American*. This source provides many links to a plethora of American and Union-made products. Support the Union movement by patronizing Union brands and Made in America products in 2014.

POSTAGE RATES TO INCREASE JANUARY 26

After the enactment of the Postal Enhancement and Accountability Act of 2006, the Postal Service has been authorized to increase its rates each year by the annual increase in the Consumer Price Index. This year, on January 26, 2014, the Postal Service will be implementing a larger increase, thanks to a December 24, 2013 decision issued by the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC).

In its Order and Decision, the PRC approved the Postal Service's request for an across-the-board exigent rate increase of 4.3%, in order to make up for losses caused by the Great Recession of 2008. The Postal Service hopes to recover \$1.8 billion a year through this rate increase, which is on top of the usual inflation-based increase. Together, these increases will move the first-class stamp to 49 cents, and other rates also will be adjusted upward in a similar manner.

The Postal Service initially sought this exigent rate increase in 2010, but the Commission denied the request due to the Postal Service's introduction of insufficient documentation regarding the effects of the Great Recession. The Postal Service re-filed the request with additional documentation in September 2013. Seventeen interested parties submitted comments in the proceeding – of these, only the NPMHU supported the Postal Service's request. In its comments, the NPMHU argued that the Postal Service has already cut its costs to the bone, particularly in its mail processing operations, and further cost-cutting measures would negatively impact service. We also noted that postal employees already have contributed their fair share to fix the USPS financial issues, and it was time for the major mailers to do likewise.

In its Order, the Commission disagreed with the Postal Service's estimate that the Great Recession

caused a loss of 189.7 billion mail pieces over a five-year period, finding instead that the Great Recession caused a loss of only 25.3 billion mail pieces (equal to \$2.766 billion in financial losses). Due to this \$2.766 billion financial loss, the Commission found that the exigent rate increase is "necessary to enable the Postal Service, under best practices of honest, efficient, and economical management, to maintain and continue the development of needed postal services." Importantly, the Commission held open the question of how long this 4.3% increase may remain in effect, and ordered the Postal Service to report to it by May 1, 2014 with a plan to phase out this 4.3% rate increase once the rate increase has produced the revenues necessary to make up for the losses due to the Great Recession. The NPMHU will continue to monitor these proceedings and intervene or comment as necessary.

QR Codes

What's the bar code at the bottom of the NPMHU Update? For your convenience; NPMHU has begun using a QR code for smartphone users. QR stands for Quick Response, and is made up of black modules in a square shape on a white background. Actually, you could call it a 3D bar code. The encoded text in the square can represent a web address or text; in this case the code will take you directly to www.npmhu.org. Camera phones (with a QR app) or QR readers can read the encoded message. Download the app and give it a try; stay connected.

FERS Retirees Receive Retirement Credit for Unused Sick Leave

The wait is over. Employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) now receive full credit for their unused sick leave in their annuity calculation when they retire. This benefit was previously available only to employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System.

You may recall that with passage of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law by President Obama as Public Law 111-84, employees covered by FERS would begin to receive retirement credit for their unused sick leave. H.R. 2647 actually was signed into law on October 28, 2009. But this

retirement credit for unused sick leave was phased in and initially provided for 50% credit of one's unused sick leave; it increased to 100% credit on January, 1, 2014. Prior to passage of this law, FERS employees received no credit for their sick leave upon retirement. As of January 1, 2014, CSRS and FERS retirees now enjoy the same sick leave retirement benefit. If you retire on or after January 1, 2014, a year's worth of sick leave will translate into a 1 percentage point increase in your FERS annuity; 1.1 percentage points if you are at age 62 or older with at least 20 years of service at retirement.



Please Post!!

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