

WHO WILL STAND TALL?



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It can easily be argued that there is never a day that comes and goes in the workplaces of the U.S. Postal Service where the rights of mail handlers — rights we have earned over decades of struggle — have not been ignored or trampled upon by the misguided and the malignant in management. Unfortunately, there also may be days where those violations are not met with the response they deserve.

This inequity cannot stand; when is enough, enough? We are the fortunate few who enjoy the increasingly rare right to organize and to bargain collectively; to speak up and to speak out about the conditions of employment; to have an actual say in the workplace. This is not gifted Brothers and Sisters, but this has been earned with the blood, sweat, tears, and sometimes the very lives of those who came before us. And they all, every man, every woman, every true Unionist who fought for every gain we now have, deserve our respect and our gratitude for all they have forged in this continuing struggle. How should we honor their work? How should we honor their sacrifice?

Following the harrowing years of a global pandemic with thousands of our Brothers and Sisters courageously reporting for duty day in and day out, and the impact it has had on all of us, the moment is now to recommit and to redouble our collective efforts to enforcing the contract on the workroom floor. There is great frustration in the disrespect we have endured in recent times and we, all of us, member and representative

alike, shoulder to shoulder, can and must do more to regain ... no, to demand the respect we deserve as members of this great Union and employees of the Postal Service.

Wages, benefits, and working conditions are not simply words on a page, but this is what it is all about, my friends. Unfortunately, there are now far too many of us who take the extraordinary advancements of those who came before us for granted. All of the gains we have achieved are worthless without active, aggressive, and daily enforcement. It is our collective responsibility to recognize and to implement the power we possess as a bargaining unit to ferociously exercise the right to challenge those wrongs that are occurring regularly in the workplace. The daily skirmishes we face with those managers, and there are plenty, who are not aware of our contractual entitlements, or worse, don't give a rat's ass, must be punished, metaphorically of course. Those "words on a page" will not defend themselves and they obviously are not self-evident to many in management. It is our duty to educate and to enforce, over and over again if necessary, the provisions and principles we have earned and fully deserve. Ask yourself, "if not me, then who will stand tall and take on this task?"

As we enter another round of bargaining, there is plenty to be grateful for as we build upon our previous gains and recognize that our work is never finished. I have great faith and am fully confident that this great Union will once again

achieve many of the needed improvements in the upcoming negotiations. However, that is where our work just begins. Active, aggressive enforcement of the current contract and its successor is absolutely critical to securing those gains and improving the working lives of all mail handlers.

REQUESTING REPRESENTATION/ DEMANDING DIGNITY

Access to Union representation is a contractual and legal right to all Mail Handlers. Unfortunately, management does its very best to make it as difficult as possible for you to consult with your Union. Should you have a concern regarding wages, benefits, or working conditions, simply request to see a steward. Management IS REQUIRED to provide you with a Union representative as soon as practicable, but in no event absent emergency conditions should it exceed two hours in time before you see speak with your Union. This does not mean they have two hours to provide a steward; the steward must be provided as soon as practicable. Nor are you required to tell management the reason for your request. If management fails or refuses to provide you with representation in the appropriate and required way, at your very first opportunity please notify any steward so that the Union can address the violation.

You also have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and there are no exceptions. For far too long we have suffered under a double standard in this regard. Managers who conduct themselves in an abusive, intimidating, or condescending way are rarely held accountable for these actions. Should you conduct yourself that way, you would be quickly shoved out the door, sometimes for good. This cannot stand, Brothers and Sisters.

The Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace is a binding contractual agreement and states in part,

"We also affirm that every employee at all levels of the Postal Service should be treated at all times with dignity, respect, and fairness. The need for the USPS to serve the public efficiently and productively, and the need for all employees to be committed to giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, does not justify actions that are abusive or intolerant. "Making the numbers" is not an excuse for the abuse of anyone. Those who do not treat others with dignity and respect will not be rewarded or promoted. Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions."

This is an enforceable rule through the grievance and arbitration procedure, and this Union stands ready to hold management officials accountable for their unacceptable

behavior. We urge you to contact Your Local Union right away when you are treated inappropriately.

MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWS

Being "invited" into a manager's office for a "little chat" can be an intimidating and sometimes job-threatening encounter, but you do not have to go it alone. Under the law you have the right to representation when the result of the interview could lead to discipline.

These are your **Weingarten Rights**. The U.S. Supreme Court found that the following rules apply.

Rule 1: *The employee must make a clear request for union representation before or during the interview. The employee cannot be punished for making this request.*

Rule 2: *After the employee makes the request, the employer must choose from among three options: Grant the request and delay questioning until the union representative arrives and (prior to the interview continuing) the representative has a chance to consult privately with the employee; Deny the request and end the interview immediately; or Give the employee a clear choice between having the interview without representation or ending the interview.*

Rule 3: *If the employer denies the request for union representation, and continues to ask questions, it commits an unfair labor practice, and the employee has a right to refuse to answer. The employer may not discipline the employee for such a refusal.*

You also should that know your Union representatives also have rights and their own authority to fully participate in this exchange with the employer. THE UNION IS NOT JUST AN OBSERVER. Whether it is a postal manager, a postal inspector, or a special agent of the OIG, your Union representative has the right to:

- Be informed of the issue by management.
- Consult with the employee privately prior to the interview.
- Speak during the interview.
- Provide advice to the employee during the interview.
- Request clarification of a question.
- Object to abusive, misleading, confusing, harassing, or badgering questions.
- Provide additional information.

Every Mail Handler should take advantage of these rights and the accompanying rules to ensure that the National Agreement is properly enforced.