



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Postal Strike of 1970



## President’s Report

*By Becky Livingston*

**A**s we wait for the arbitrator’s decision on what I expect will be the most important collective bargaining agreement we have seen negotiated in decades, there have been a lot of questions regarding union membership; with the most frequently asked question being “Why should I belong to the union and pay dues when I am never in trouble?” Well, let’s go back to the beginning. The APWU is preparing to meet in New York City on March 28, 2020, where it all began, to honor the union and all of the men and women who went on an eight-day strike in March 1970. While the strike may have started in New York City on March 17, 1970, I am proud to say that the St. Louis postal workers were not far behind. This U.S. postal strike against the federal government, regarded as illegal, was the largest wildcat strike in U.S. history. The strike influenced the contents of the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, which dissolved the United States Post Office Department, replaced it with the more corporate United States Postal Service, and guaranteed **collective bargaining rights for postal workers** (though not the right to strike). At the time, postal workers were not permitted by law to engage in collective bargaining. Striking postal workers felt wages were very low, benefits poor and working conditions unhealthy and unsafe. Prior to the enactment of the Postal Reorganization Act postal workers’ salaries were \$8,442 per year. Following the March 1970 strike the enactment of the Postal Reorganization Act mandated salary increases of no less than 6% effective Dec. 27, 1969, and an 8% increase effective July 18, 1970, as well as a continuation of federal benefits. The 1971 negotiations resulted in a contract that continued postal work rules and working conditions; provided for salary increases, and included a “capped” cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Commemorating the strike also has lessons for us for the struggles that we face today. It helps us understand that much of what we take for granted didn’t come to us because of the generosity of management, but came to us because of the struggles and courage of postal workers who came before us. Remember, it was against the law for federal workers to strike (it still is). The penalty for a striking worker included automatic loss of their job, a fine of at least \$1,000 and a sentence of a year and a day in jail. But postal workers were still angry enough to risk it all. I can’t even imagine what the workers were going through, but we need to appreciate and honor the members of our union who risked it all to benefit not just themselves, but the generations of postal workers who followed them. You always hear that there is strength in numbers and that certainly is true more than ever today. Please try to remember **there is no union without “U” and “I.”** We all need to stick together, educate ourselves, and continue to support the union. Please remember that the union does more than represent members who find themselves having

difficulties maintaining a regular work schedule or following instructions. We address issues regarding harassment in the workplace, reversions and abolishment of full-time regular duty assignments (happening in all crafts), management failing to properly post duty assignments when they are vacated due to attrition, dealing with management's failure to properly process OWCP claims for traumatic and occupational injuries because they don't know how to file the paperwork. The officers and stewards of this local take their responsibilities very seriously. When you have the time please thank your steward the next time you see them. I know that I don't thank them often enough for the great job they are all doing. We learn something new every day and we all try to make sure that everyone is represented to the best of our abilities. I would like to thank everyone for their continued support of the St. Louis Gateway District Area Local. Your union membership means a lot to us and it also means a lot to you and your family. If not for the union the Postal Service would set us back 50 years and we now know, with a little bit of a history lesson, what that would mean for us all. **The struggle continues.**

## Executive Vice President

By Gene Hollenbeck

**To know where we are going, we have to know where we have been.**

**F**ifty years ago marks the anniversary of the first ever Postal Strike in this country. It all started because we had no bargaining rights. All we had was "collective begging" of Congress and the White House to get wage increases. In 1970 the starting pay was a meager \$6,176 annually then after working for 21 years workers would reach the top rate of \$8,442 annually, barley subsistence level.

*(The American Postal Worker, April 1993)*

In every contract since that time, our national officers have been able to secure us better wages and benefits.

We are still waiting for information on our new contract. We had hoped to have news of the outcome of the arbitration by the time we went to press. As of yet we have not heard anything. As soon as we get word, we will let the membership know.

**Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow**



# COME TO OUR SIDE OF THE FENCE

We started in 1928 as the credit union for postal workers. Today, we've opened our doors to everyone in our surrounding communities, but our roots remain. We can save you money on:

- Checking accounts with online banking, mobile banking, mobile deposit and more<sup>1</sup>
- Auto loans with low rates and no payments for 90 days<sup>2</sup> (even on refinances!)
- Home equity loans with low rates and no closing costs<sup>3</sup>
- Mortgage loans with competitive rates
- Savings, CDs, money markets and IRAs
- Club accounts for youth, teens and seniors
- And more!

Start saving money and open your accounts and loans online today!



Federally  
Insured By  
NCUA



314-892-5400

NeighborsCU.org

Downtown • Fenton • Florissant • Hazelwood  
Jennings • South County • St. Peters

**neighbors**  
CREDIT UNION  
Where the grass is greener

<sup>1</sup>Message and data rates may apply from your wireless carrier. <sup>2</sup>Interest will continue to accrue during deferral period. <sup>3</sup>If loan is paid off and closed within 24 months from opening of loan, member must reimburse the credit union for fees paid.

Membership eligibility required on all offers. Restrictions apply on all offers. See Neighbors Credit Union for complete details on all offers.

# Secretary-Treasurer Report

By Robin Robertson



**A**nual Tax Reporting is due for individual members on Wednesday, April 15. The local's LM-2 should be completed and signed no later than Monday, March 30. Best practice is to make sure everything is entered and ready for signature. Some locals file their own 990 electronically by May 15. We have a local CPA who files our yearly 990. I am constantly learning how our trustees and secretary-treasurer are responsible for reviewing the 990s.

I am excited about the upcoming secretary-treasurer's conference here in St. Louis in early March.

**The new mileage and tax rates.** Effective in January 2020, the IRS mileage rate decreased to \$.575 per mile. All local stewards and officers please understand you are responsible for providing proper documentation and get approval from the president.

**Full dues paying retirees.** The APWU local constitution explains that retired union members are qualified to continue to pay full dues to the local and national. These retirees have all the rights of the general membership such as: holding office, voice, voting, and attending regular general membership meetings. We currently have a total of eight cash dues paying members: **Former President Teddie Days (Missouri retiree president), former President Melvin Sanders (director of retirees for St. Louis Gateway), former President Roosevelt Stewart (trustee for Missouri Postal Workers retirees), former President Fred Wolfmeyer (Step 2 designee/steward), former National Advocate Carl Carisslas, Executive Vice President Millard 'Gene' Hollenbeck, President**

**Rebecca Livingston, and former steward/Assistant Craft Director Christine Smith (constituency coordinator (ARPI and CBTU)).**

**According to Article 4 Dues, Fees, and Assessments. SECTION 1.**

A. All applications for membership shall be made on PS Form 1187, and dues shall be paid by payroll deduction. Members who are not subject to payroll deduction **shall pay their local dues in full (annually) by January 31 or pay semi-annually (half by January 31 and the other half by June 30) in order to remain a member in good standing. In the general officer election year, members who are not subject to payroll deduction shall pay their annual local dues in full by January 31 to be eligible to run for office and/or vote in the election. The national office will send members separate bills for national dues.**

According to Section 1.A., the second half of local dues is due by June 30. Since this is national convention year, any member attending the national convention and retiring by June 30 will be responsible for paying his/her local and national dues by May 30, in order to be a delegate at the national convention in Los Angeles, California, August 14-21.

**Organizing is the key.** Within the last year the local has had jobs being reverted and retirements that have had an impact on membership. In order to walk in solidarity together we need a voice to vote. Historically, the purpose of the union is to be strength in numbers and walk in solidarity.

## eRMS System Change Update

**A** meeting was held at the national level concerning changes in the eRMS reporting. Concerns were raised over the language that is seen by employees should they choose to use this means to report an absence/request unscheduled leave;

*"All information on this computer system or mobile device to include GPS location services may be monitored, intercepted, recorded, read, copied, captured, and disclosed by and to authorized personnel for official purposes, including criminal prosecution. You have no expectations of privacy using this system or mobile device. Any authorized or unauthorized use of this computer system or mobile device signifies consent to and compliance with Postal Service policies and these terms."*

The USPS has provided us with no updated information since the meeting on December 17, 2019. The information was requested again today and we have been told that at this time they cannot give us a date of expected completion as to when that language will be removed.

**So once again there is great concern over this program and we advise employees to continue to use the 800 number when reporting an absence and requesting unscheduled leave.**

# P.O.W.E.R. Plays Trivia Night with Lift for Life Academy!

*By Mia Smith, P.O.W.E.R. Secretary*

In 2000, Lift for Life Academy School, located at 1731 South Broadway, in the historic Souldard District, was the first independent charter middle school to open in the City of St. Louis. The Academy now serves approximately 100 students in grades k-2 and 6-12. LFLA hosted a Trivia Night fundraiser event, last Saturday night in their new gym auditorium. P.O.W.E.R. sisters purchased a table of 10 for \$25 each person, which net a \$250 donation. Additional funds were raised that totaled \$125, therefore, the grand total donated was \$315 for Lift for Life Academy. This is our way of contributing to the community as well as other organizations that are vital to our younger generation.

On behalf of P.O.W.E.R., thanks to all who came out to support LFLA Trivia Night: Rebecca Livingston (APWU president), Robbin Nichols, Christine Smith, Wendy Smith-Scales and guest, Melani Brown and guest, Cecelia Stevens, Falencia Anderson, and me. Thanks to all who couldn't make it but donated \$25: Robbie Robertson, Carolyn Driver (P.O.W.E.R. chairman), Claudella Suggs, Lisa Harlan (maintenance), and Janis Dumas.

P.O.W.E.R. (Post Office Women for Equal Rights) serves the community by assisting and volunteering with organizations that offer family assistance to the homeless, family shelters and food pantry ministries. If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact the APWU Union Hall at 314-231-7665 and leave a detailed message for P.O.W.E.R. Chairman Carolyn Driver (support services). New ideas as well as new members are always welcomed and encouraged!

Please do not forget the month of March is "Women's History Month." P.O.W.E.R. members will distribute ribbons to women to wear this month to commemorate women's history and our continued struggle!

Thank you.





Editor's  
*Corner*



In light of the recent killings in Milwaukee, it is vital that we at the United States Postal Service have a zero tolerance policy. An employee walked into the brewery where he worked and shot and killed several of his co-workers. No one wants to arrive alive and end their life. That being said, we must once again reiterate that fighting will not be tolerated at the post office. Don't allow the person that you are beefing with cause you to lose your job.

This is a workplace. Not a park or a playground. If you are having problems with another employee, don't take it upon yourself to solve the dispute by getting physical. Both parties will be put off the clock and there is no guarantee that either party will return to duty or how long you will be off the clock. Please don't get so angry that you feel that you have to resort to violence. We as postal employees have enough to worry about with Trump's budget proposals; we don't need the added stress of fighting.

Too many of our newer employees are getting removed from the post office because of their attendance. Not having a babysitter, your car breaking down, you had something to do, are not valid reasons for calling in and missing work. We all have those problems occasionally, but you can't use those excuses every week. I know working at the post office can be stressful. But you don't want to get fired for not coming. If you need FMLA, fill out the forms. We all get sick, our kids get sick and we have legitimate reasons for being absent from the job. Try to come every day that you can.

There was a clerk that had been at the post office for 28 years. The clerk had two elderly parents who were in ill health and the clerk stated it was her responsibility to care for them. She started to miss a lot of work. She exceeded the parameters of her FMLA. The clerk started posting pictures on Facebook of trips to many exotic locations. There were cruises and dances and trips to the casino, but there was no mention of the sick parents. The clerk took off so much she was removed because of her attendance. Too many people had seen the pictures from the trips. She did not get her job back. Be very careful about what you post on Facebook. You never know who will see it.

If you have questions, please consult with a shop steward. Listening to your co-workers and friends may lead you down the wrong path. If you need verification or have questions, ask for a shop steward. You need to ask your supervisor for a steward. This is for your protection. Say you walk over to the booth and no one knows where you went. You could be charged with abandonment of your assignment. If you have a grievance, the steward needs someone to file it with, that's another reason you have to ask your supervisor for a steward.

We all want to work in a safe and violence free environment. Employees, management, and the union must work hard to make that happen. If you are having a problem, there is EAP, the shop steward and officers of the union will try to be of assistance. You are not alone.

## Postal Employees Again Targeted in White House Budget

**D**rastic cuts to postal employees' wages and benefits are included within the White House's fiscal year 2021 budget released on Monday, February 10. While the White House estimates its budget would save the Postal Service \$97 billion over the next 11 years, it would be done so at the expense of its employees.

The FY21 budget takes direction from the 2018 Postal Task Force Report by calling for utilizing the private sector for mail sorting and processing, taking away jobs from union members. Impacting the mission of the Postal Service directly, the budget and the Task Force propose changing universal service obligation by reducing delivery frequency and providing access to the mailbox. The budget and the Task Force also attack union rights, calling for aligning the Postal Service with the rest of the federal workforce, which would mean moving away from collective bargaining rights over pay.

Current and retired employees would see negative impacts to both Civil Service Retirement Systems and Federal Employee Retirement System benefits. Similar to language seen in previous White House budgets, the FY21 plan call for changes to FERS and CSRS benefits. FERS employees would see an increase of contribution by 1% every year until it is equal to the contributions of the federal government; and elimination of the FERS supplement for those who retire before the age of 62; and elimination of cost of living adjustments (COLA); CSRS retirees would face a reduction of COLA by 0.5%. Further damaging to retirees, the FY21 budget utilizes a "high 5" instead of a "high 3" using the highest five salary years to calculate annuities instead of the current highest three salary years. Finally the budget calls to reduce to TSP G Fund interest rate, a change which has been decried as it creates a G Fund that is ineffective for investors and does not generate the budgetary savings promised.

# Associate Office Director

By Melani Brown

Greeting members. This is my third article and you know what they say, "Third time's a charm!"

Let's discuss lunches. There is no provision in the CBA for 801s or one minute lunches or reduced lunches. All clerks who work over six hours in a day are required by the contract to take a 30-minute lunch. No taking only 10 minutes so you can go into overtime. No 801s so we go home a half hour early. There is no justifiable reason to not take your lunch break. Also, we need to take into consideration what this does to clerk earned hours, which are the numbers that management is using to revert clerk jobs every time somebody retires.

So let's look at it like this. There are 14 clerks in your office and every day

half of them are not doing their lunch rings. That's 3½ hours every day that clerks are not utilized for lunch coverage, that comes up to about 21 hours a week. So for you senior clerks that feel like you don't have to follow the contract regarding taking lunches, you could be keeping a PSE from making regular simply because you want to go home a half hour early. That doesn't seem quite fair to the PSEs who are already making less money, don't get paid sick leave, only get paid for six holidays, and so on. Management is doing everything in their power to reduce the clerk work force, let's not make their job any easier. Also you can be assured that I will be randomly pulling clock rings at all my AO offices to see if management is complying with the contract.

Please be advised that this could potentially result in discipline for those clerks who are not in compliance with what the contract states. The union has diligently fought for appropriate lunch breaks; wash up time breaks and two 10 minute breaks that the clerks get daily.

So let's all do the right thing and take our lunches like we are supposed to, because all you are really doing is hurting the other clerks in your office by continuing to not do your clock rings for lunch and cheating the other clerks and PSEs out of these hours. **Do the right thing; take your lunch break!**



*Coalition of  
Black Trade  
Unionists  
Banquet*



# They Don't Have the Right

By Omar Gonzalez

*(This article first appeared in the September/October 2019 issue of the American Postal Worker magazine.)*

**W**e often hear that “management has the right to mismanage.” **No they don't!** Laws require the USPS be run efficiently, including managing the workforce. Postal regulation, statutes and our contract outline what management cannot do. When we fight management, we must use all three resources.

Postal life would be less hectic if only all parties followed the union contract. Regulations related to your working conditions, hours and wages are subject to the contract. Management does not own the Postal Service, they operate it.

**They don't have the unilateral right to do our work** unless permitted by Article 1 Section 6a and b. In level 18 offices they can do only 15 hours of craft work per week. In larger offices they have to meet one of the five exceptions, otherwise they have to pay the employees who would have performed the work.

**They don't have the right to just make anyone a 204b** unless a PS1723 is issued to union in advance and restricted the use of the 204b before an individual forfeits their bid.

**They don't have the right to unilaterally change established past practices in your office** even when new bosses take over. Article 5 and the law prohibit unilateral changes to the CBA or past practice, unless negotiated with the union after notice is given.

**They don't have the right to make cross craft assignments** unless they meet certain conditions reasonably unforeseeable or unavoidable per Article 7. Intentional understaffing is not one of those.

**They don't have the right to impose overtime** without penalties which include additional premiums for exceeding the 12-hour daily/60 hours weekly limits. Nor can the schedule overtime willy-nilly without penalty. CBA Article 8 has 2 ½ pages of rules and the JCIM has 13 pages on OT rules.

**They don't have the right to change your work hours** unless they comply with federal law, their own out-of-schedule premium rules and Article 8 contract restrictions. Nor can they change your rest days without complying with the work week and craft articles.

**They don't have the right to demand medical documentation for sick leave absence of three or less days** unless they can show a legitimate business reason to do it.

It is not just on their demand, they must also consider your welfare — equitably on a case by case basis — per Article 10, 16, 19.

**They don't have the right to reassign full time regulars at will.** They must comply with seniority rules, bid rights, section identifications, skill requirements, higher level pay rules and other contract restrictions.

**They don't have the right to treat PSEs as servant or casuals.** These employees have specific contract rights. Being a “postal support employee” is not a green light for mistreatment. PSEs have their own CBA sections covering their employment and their conversion to career status.

**They don't have right to unilaterally deny light duty to injured workers,** they are obligated to make every effort to find work that the employee can perform. Being denied work is not automatic. There are strong protections in Article 13.

**They don't have the right to make you work in a dirty, unsafe place nor abuse you in any way.** Many regulations, laws and Article 14 offer strong protections. Federal law imposes penalties for unsafe conditions.

**They don't have the right to impose discipline at will** and must prove “just cause” exists by following six distinct rules. In discipline cases, management has the burden of proof and must comply with due process procedures.

The contract has 392 pages agreed upon work rules that have no value unless they are enforced by us all. You have a right to grieve violations.



St. Louis Gateway APWU  
 1705 S. Broadway  
 St. Louis, MO 63104  
 Address Service Requested

PRST STD  
 US Postage  
**PAID**  
 St. Louis, MO  
 Permit No. 860

## Press On

Official publication of the St. Louis Gateway District Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO published bimonthly. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor of the local. All articles submitted for publication are subject to editing.

**Shelia Patton-Harris ... Editor**  
 PROUD MEMBER  
 POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

### OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL

**President..... Rebecca Livingston**  
**Vice President..... Gene Hollenbeck**  
**Secretary-Treasurer ..... Robin Robertson**  
 Dir. of Industrial Relations.....Dave Childers  
 Editor.....Shelia Patton-Harris  
 Dir. of Research & Education.....Dean Hathaway  
 Sergeant-at-Arms.....Claudella Suggs

### DIRECTORS

Clerk Craft.....Bill Brady  
 Maintenance.....Chris Wilkerson  
 Vehicle Service.....Bobby Riehl  
 IT/ASC.....Janis Dumas  
 Associate Office Director .....Melani Brown

**Union Office**  
**1705 S. Broadway**  
**St. Louis, MO 63104**  
**(314) 231-7665**  
 FAX: (314) 231-5709  
 After Hours (314) 810-4099

**Office Hours**  
 Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Steward Booths, Downtown  
 Clerk ... 314-436-5331  
 Maintenance ... 314-436-4668  
 MVS ... 314-436-5027

## GATEWAY LOCAL CALENDAR

March 4	(Wednesday)	Executive Board Meeting (2 p.m.)
March 8	(Sunday)	General Membership Meeting (3 p.m.)
March 9	(Monday)	Steward Training (9a.m. & 6 p.m.)
April 8	(Wednesday)	Executive Board Meeting (2 p.m.)
April 11	(Saturday)	General Membership Meeting (9:30 a.m.)
April 13	(Monday)	Steward Training (9 a.m. & 6 p.m.)
April 29	(Wednesday)	Executive Board Meeting (2 p.m.)
May 3	(Sunday)	General Membership Meeting (3 p.m.)
May 18	(Monday)	Steward Training (9 a.m. & 6 p.m.)
<b>May 25</b>	<b>(Monday)</b>	<b>Memorial Day Holiday</b>

There will be no General Membership Meetings in the months of July and August.

The Union Hall will be closed on holidays.



**Moving?**  
*Send us your new address  
 so we can stay in touch.*

Help Nancy, our office secretary, by sending us your address changes. Your union spends many work hours and pays significant postage fees to obtain your correct address. We cannot get your union paper to you on time without your correct address. Thank you.