

Postal Worker West

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Elimination of Mail Processing Operations and Others on the Chopping Block

Slicing Up Postal Operations

ARLINGTON, VA- The Postal Service could save more than \$1.3 billion if it substitutes postal workers with private sector mail processors and an additional \$1 to \$1.6 billion in savings by outsourcing the retail network, according to an OIG analysis of options to reduce operational costs.



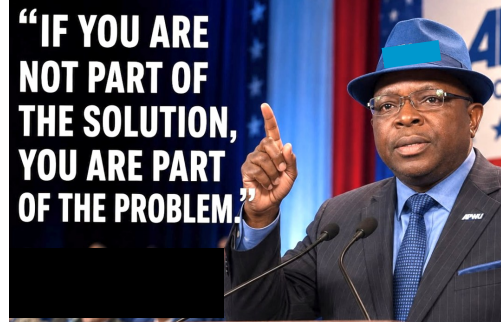
The elimination of the middle mile (mail processing) operation is not a new concept first proposed during Trump's first administration. The OIG's report claims to be based on policy proposals made by various "stakeholders", including the Government Accountability Office, shippers, think tanks, mailers and according to the report- Congress.

Citing the Postal Service's "dire financial condition" costs and losses of about \$118 billion in the last twenty (FY) years the report compiled more than a dozen supposed revenue generating and cost savings options proffers by the above stated stakeholders.

Cut Out OWCP Coverage

One of those options is taking postal employees out of the *Federal Employees Compensation Act* (FECA) so that postal workers injured at work would no longer file for compensation with the OWCP (Office of Workers Compensation Programs) but would instead have to go through a private insurance program and negotiate settlement of a claim instead of receiving indefinite payments.

Postal Workers have been covered by FECA since the law was enacted in 1916, as well as, the amendments made in 1949, 1960, 1966 and the most recent amendment providing COP in 1974. The "proposal" would require injured employees to be treated by selected medical providers eliminating the right of injured workers to be treated by a doctor of choice. More postal workers are injured at work than the entire federal workforce combined. *continued on page 3*



Maintenance Director Idowu Balogun gave an impassioned plea for delegates to support an additional NBA in the West.

Maintenance Secures More Representation

LOS ANGELES- Convention delegates adopted a resolution adding an additional Maintenance National Business Agent for the Western Region.

The debate over the resolution was often heated and emotional as delegate after delegate argued the pros and cons of adding to the Union legacy costs vs the need for more hands on representation.

The Constitution Committee recommended against the resolution which was submitted by Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and California State conventions.

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403+ Employees Targeted For Excessing In the West

The Western Region, like most of the other regions throughout the country, is being bombarded with notifications from Area postal officials of massive involuntary reassignments.

These forced reassignments often referred to as “excessing” is the result of the failing 10 Year Plan imposed by former PMG DeJoy and embraced by the current PMG despite its demonstrated failure to produce projected savings.

City of Industry, Denver, Los Angeles, Fresno Sacramento and Billings have been hit with more targets expected in every state.

The rationale given for these impacts are due to the elimination of equipment and the installment of automation that will trigger a reduction of the number of clerks needed to maintain remaining operations in the hundreds.

Dislocation and Inconvenience Expected

While the contract provisions of Article 12 require that inconvenience and dislocation to full time employees be kept to a minimum the reality is that even a one to two hour change in reporting time or reposting of assignments due to rest day changes can and do cause havoc on the work and home lives of postal workers.

For the first time in more than 20 years the MVS* is also being targeted for excessing in the West and in the Central Regions of the country.

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What Does the Vote-By-Mail Issue Mean To You?

The headlines over political and legal fights on the right of Americans to Vote-By-Mail place postal workers smack in the middle of the fight, exposing postal workers to be unfairly targeted as somehow manipulating the sanctity of the mail balloting process.

Nothing could be further than the truth. Postal workers strive to ensure prompt efficient processing and delivery of the US Mails including giving priority attention to political and election mail.

Highlights on What The Unions Have Said

The issue tends to discredit Vote-by-Mail and postal worker commitment to serve the American public....

While it is the Union's position that the Executive Order issued is unconstitutional, as is the Postal Service's published rule, allegations of widespread fraud are not true.....

Union members should not be unfairly blamed for voters not receiving their ballots.

Authority for verifying voter eligibility is vested in each state's board of elections as vested by the US Constitution.

Postal Workers take an oath to support and defend the Constitution and take pride in their commitment to serve America and in their patriotic duty to move election mail as swiftly and securely as possible.

Supreme Court Halts the Current Impact For Now

The Supreme Court's recent action (albeit not unanimous) has stopped the Postal Service from implementing parts of the Executive Order. Many political analysts believe that the effort to change the Vote-by-Mail process will continue post mid-term.

The Courts decision comes only weeks before the all important midterm elections and the consequences of those critical elections to the country and the postal service for that matter.

....continued on page 5

CHOPPING BLOCK *continued from page 1*

RESTRUCTURE THE WORKFORCE

Another proposed option, according to the report, from unnamed stakeholders is to cancel the automatic conversions of 'pre-career' employees (e.g., PSEs) and then hire more pre-career employees with less benefits and lower pay.

It is also proposed to reduce the total headcount [of employees] by such actions as a hiring freeze, early out retirement incentives or lay-offs. A reduction of the headcount, according to the analysis, could save up to about \$5 and a half billion.



RECONFIGURING (OUTSOURCING) RETAIL POST OFFICES

Despite acknowledging that retail operations generate more revenue than they cost to operate another option proposed is to outsource more retail work than the current 6% being outsourced.

The report also acknowledges that the public would lose access to US Post Offices and labor reductions will impact postal employees. Meanwhile, the claim is that the public may gain additional access to postal services offered by 3rd party retailers at 'more convenient locations.'

CHANGE THE RETIREE AND CURRENT HEALTH BENEFIT FUNDING

Yet another proposed option is to close retiree benefits for those current employees not yet vested and for new employees. Also, reduce what Postal Management currently contributes to FERs resulting in a gap that will be addressed through reduced employee benefits with employees contribute a higher percentage into retirement. Or USPS could 'transition' to a defined contribution or hybrid retirement plan resulting in shifting likely investment risks to employees.

REDUCE DELIVERY DAYS

Options proffered is to reduce mail deliver to 3-5 days per week. This would allow management to cut back its delivery network, reduce labor, reduce mail processing and reduce transportation costs for a purposed possible savings of about \$3.4 billion based on FY 2024 figures. While the report reveals the potential of reduction in letter carriers it does not raise any concern for the reduction of processing clerks and MVS drivers.

NO MORE NEGOTIATIONS ON WAGE INCREASES

Unidentified stakeholders proposed changing collective bargaining rules to give more flexibility to manage the workforce and to limit the right to bargain over compensation (wages). They also proposed, as they have in the past, to force an arbitrator to consider USPS finances in disputes over wages.

What does this all mean?

"Look the report makes it clear that some of these changes would require changes in the laws while others are under the discretion of management. What it means in my opinion is that while the PMG cries broke very powerful entities are throwing in their two cents and pointing crooked fingers at us," said Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

"You and I must be aware of the consequences of elections and the impact they have on our future employment and upcoming contract talks that begin in a matter of months", cautioned Coordinator Gonzalez. "Educate yourself. Get involved in issues that affect you and Mobilize Now!", he added.



Delegates reject AI In Grievance Handling

Los Angeles— Efforts to incorporate AI technology into the development and handing of contract issues being grieved were rejected by the delegates to the Union's Convention.

Resolutions calling for the National Union to develop, deploy and maintain customized RAG Artificial Intelligence applications to contract research allegedly to increase administrative efficiency were debated.

Other debates revolved around calls for incorporation of web APIs to the Union's electronic grievance system. After much debate the resolutions were defeated.

The Rationale

As the current news cycle reveals there is growing concern over the development of Artificial Intelligence in many applications. There is also growing opposition to Data Centers and the impact they have on communities.

All those contentions and more were raised by delegates who debated the resolutions which were countered by those seeking the use of the AI technology as a high-tech tool against management.

The Committee, speaking on behalf of the Executive Board, raised concerns over Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) and exposing the system to RAG poisoning which can lead to misapplication on the interpretation of the contract and produce possible hallucinations.

Meanwhile, some locals have experimented with AI in grievance processing but the concerns remain and the National Union has not officially adopted AI applications.

Armed Guards Deployed

Management is deploying private security at major plants which they claim are hired to enhance safety and control access, deter unauthorized activity and respond to disturbances or safety incidents. Locals sounding alarm are advised to hold Labor-Mgt. meetings to determine the scope of their interaction with employees. Often bosses have employees walked out for alleged failure to follow instructions or insubordination that do not meet the criteria of Article 16.7 of the CBA. Will the tin badge cops be used then? Concerns should be elevated to HQ !



Maintenance secures extra Rep.

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The debate over adding an extra NBA was often politically heated by spirited delegates and national officers.

A major contention was the backlog of cases in the craft. Attention was drawn to the Regional Coordinator's Report ➡ of open cases in the Convention Book.

The rebuttal was that the figure of the 840 cases backlogged for Maintenance was under reported with one NBA/delegate claiming that there are **5,000** step 3 grievances backlogged. In the end, delegates overwhelmingly voted to create a new NBA in the Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Crafts.

When quizzed on his position, Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez advised

delegates to not vote the politics, nor the position but to vote for what is best for the Union.

The appointment of a new National Business Agent is not expected until 30-60 days with a likely start date in 2027. There are 6,402 Maintenance employees in the Western Region and 3,690 MVS employees. Only one member from each craft will be appointed.

District	Craft	Open Cases
AZ-NM	Clerk	949
AZ-NM	Maint	159
AZ-NM	MVS	147
CA-1	Clerk	119
CA-1	Maint	23
CA-1	MVS	16
CA-2	Clerk	390
CA-2	Maint	90
CA-2	MVS	15
CA-3	Clerk	238
CA-3	Maint	39
CA-3	MVS	29
CA-4	Clerk	244
CA-4	Maint	19
CA-4	MVS	11
CA-5	Clerk	188
CA-5	Maint	35
CA-5	MVS	5
CA-6	Clerk	512
CA-6	Maint	234
CA-6	MVS	12
CO-WY	Clerk	281
CO-WY	Maint	41
CO-WY	MVS	11
HI	Clerk	14
HI	Maint	3
ID-MT-OR	Clerk	732
ID-MT-OR	Maint	117
ID-MT-OR	MVS	202
NV-UT-OR	Clerk	240
NV-UT-OR	Maint	20
WA	Clerk	163
WA	Maint	63
WA	MVS	30

Except from the Regional Coordinator's Convention Book Report.

Vote-By-Mail Issues continued from page 2

Management had published a rule that would require how states prepare and submit federal mail in ballots for processing and delivery. It is a 95+ page rule which also created a “Federal Ballot Mail Portal”. Management claimed that voter info such as social security numbers or birth dates would not be collected. USPS would however, be able to track and “reconcile” ballot mail.

A whistle blower submitted information warning that the system was untested and was being rushed which could result in millions of votes being delayed or rejected.

A detailed Congressional inquiry to the PMG in late August revealed the whistleblower’s disclosure and made several critical inquiries into the USPS rule and the PMG’s intent. At press time, it is not clear if the PMG has responded to the inquiry by the deadline set by the Senator.

However, USPS issued a statement claiming it has spent months developing the portal to make it available to election

officials and regardless of political party or perspective they share a common goal of ensuring that Americans can have confidence that their election mail will be handled securely and delivered reliably.

Vote-By-Mail Has Existed for Decades

“Vote-by-Mail goes back to the Civil War. Recently, in the mid terms of 2022 , 63.5% of registered voters voted by mail. In 2024 the post office processed 99 million ballots but handled some 3 billion pieces of election mail which included ballots,” said Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.



“I know first hand that postal workers go into ballot processing operation mode and give election mail priority handling. We have in our contract the *Election Mail Task Force* MOU which has been a success and we intend to due our due diligence this election cycle,” said Gonzalez confidently.

“Any negative news about postal services, delivery delays or political interference reflects negatively, but unfairly, on the work postal workers do and threatens our job security”, he added.

“What does concern me however, is that the Postal Service has always been a **carrier** and **not an administrator** of elections. I am not so confident of the competence of our management in this regard especially in light of what the brave whistleblower disclosed,” said the once troubled but now somewhat relieved Coordinator.

PMG Resignation Rumors Circulate

Several outlets have revealed that PMG Steiner is contemplating or at least hinting at quitting his post at the post office. Officials have not confirmed the news nor firmly denied it. Others point out that the PMG had only committed to a two year stint at the supposed independent agency.

Others pointed to pressure the PMG faces and has faced before Congress. When pressed for comment on the impending possible resignation of the PMG, Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez responded...*“Frankly who cares, he has been thus far a hands off PMG that has shown no real concerns for the employees who service the American public nor is he a friend to Labor. His manager style has emboldened the indifference of the bosses everywhere!”*

EXCESSING continued from page 2

The Contract offers some protections when it comes to involuntary reassignments. To lessen the impact management must:

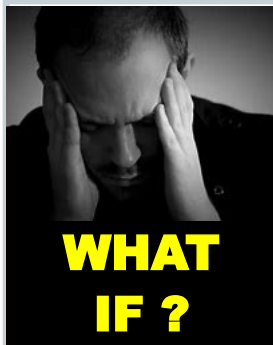
- reduce the number of non-career hours
- withhold (reserve) residual vacancies to place juniors.
- Return out of craft employees on detail or on light/limited duty back to their craft.
- Allow transfers via 21day eReassign to clerks who can take their seniority with them.**
- Allow senior clerks to volunteer to be reassigned outside the installation to other clerical withheld clerk assignments and keep their seniority.
- Give employees who request to return to their craft and installation "retreat rights" if requested.
- Allow impacted employees to select, using their present seniority, from among the residual vacancies available within a 50 mile radius restriction.
- If post excessing work hour analysis does not support excessing return the impacted employees to their craft/installation and restore their status.

Many more impacts are expected as management continues their disastrous 10 year plan. When the reality of the impact hits individual junior employees they tend to blame the Union.

But if it were up to the Union NO ONE would be displaced or reassigned and everyone would get a 25% pay increase with weekends off. *"It does not work that way,"* explains Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez. *"The contract provision, Article 12 Principles of Seniority & Reassignment, has been in existence for over 60 years with some elementary modifications reached mostly through Step 4 settlements or Memorandums,"* elaborated the Coordinator who administers Article 12.

The law, PRA 39 USC 1001 (e) , gives management the right to direct employees and determine the method, means and personnel by which operations will be conducted. *"Yes, but they must comply with the contract when it comes to applying seniority and reassignments,"* Gonzalez expounded. *"Impacts facing the Western Region are posted on the union's web-site under **Western Region Impact Statements** and locals are requested to be proactive to monitor management's action and to challenge and report any violations of the CBA."*

* MVS excessing has peculiar applications. **When transferring via 21day eReassign clerks are cautioned there are no retreat rights and if there are qualification requirements those must be met to retain employment.



Heaven forbid – if the next Congress were to relax the laws that permit only the Postal Service to deliver mail to mailboxes (Private Express Statutes) the Lay Off protections in the contract covering all employees employed as of September 20, 2024 will expire. Thousands will be exposed to lay offs including those who have not yet earned lay off protections hired since 2021/22.

Heaven forbid - if the White House by Executive Order was to permit or order the PMG to eliminate mail processing operations and contract that work out to private companies massive lay offs would follow and the financial impact to postal workers would devastate one of the last remaining middle class jobs remaining.

Heaven forbid– if the White House by Executive Order or the next Congress orders the PMG to contract out retail operations thousands of postal workers would be out of a job. Massive excessing and exposure to lay off would follow. Customers would pay more for services.

Heaven forbid - if any of the options being proposed to cut costs (outlined on page 1 and 3) were to be allowed by a White House Executive Order or action by the next Congress.....*think about it!*

BE AWARE– ORGANIZE - MOBILIZE.....TAKE ACTION !