



The

Union Mail

Vol. 68 No. 1 | January 2025

Published by the NY Metro Area Postal Union

"The Labor Movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress."— Martin Luther King, Jr.

In Memory of Jacquelyn Owens

May 16, 1957 - December 7, 2024



Remarks in President's Letter — pg. 2

What a well lived life looks like!



Jonathan Smith

Sitting here reminiscing about every single moment we had. Jackie was a BEAUTIFUL SOUL!!!! She helped me with so much in becoming a better man and

president for the members of NY Metro. No matter what she was going through, she always had words of encouragement she would share with me.

Saying goodbye in a meaningful way can be challenging. Jackie, you were so caring and considerate. It is so painful to believe you are no more. But I am grateful that your pain and suffering is gone, and your memory will last forever.

When a family member passes away (Jackie, my big sister) I usually go through 3 stages of mourning, grief, anger, and acceptance.

First, I feel the weight of losing someone's spirit and soul from this earth, there are tears but also wonderful memories that come bubbling to the surface. Most of all the feeling of loss from never being able to see or speak to them again.

Then comes the anger. That stage is more complex. It can be anger at God for taking a person away who was one of the few truly good people that you knew. Someone that was kind and thoughtful to the people they knew. Someone whose spirit you admired and will never hear them say Jonathan I got your back, again.

By now I have had so many of the people I loved and admired both in and outside of APWU leave this

planet. I'm very familiar with these stages of mourning but this time I thought I would ease my anger by writing about my dear friend Jacquelyn Owens.

When someone like Jackie leaves us too soon the chance to give them the opportunities, they truly deserved ends, that would have angered me. Jackie, you once told me that being an officer of this great union was something she could only dream about. When I originally offered her the Secretary Treasurer's position, she turned it down saying she was afraid to fail the members and me. I told her she could do it and I would support her. She reconsidered and said she would try, but if she could not do the job, she would resign. Unfortunately, Jackie's health cut her career short, but she left NY Metro better than she found it. She gave Metro all she had left after a long career of fighting for the members on the workroom floor. Jackie, you owe us nothing!

Then acceptance sets in, and I know that Jackie loved her life. She far surpassed any of the expectations she had about where she'd wind up in his life and that gives me comfort when saying goodbye to her for the last time. Jackie was a success in life because she was a great mother, grandmother, co-worker, and friend.

We had good times and some hard times, but Jackie always kept that beautiful smile on her face. I am going to miss you dearly. You struggled and put up a courageous fight with cancer, but God said come home to be with him in his house. Now you are an Angel looking down on us.

You were a wonderful person to all that had the pleasure to know you, it is clear by all the beautiful people who are celebrating your existence.

Jackie brought light, laughter, and confidence to everyone she touched.

People didn't gravitate to her because she could solve all their problems; they came to Jackie because she cared and wanted to help resolve them.

I will think of you fondly for the rest of my life. We are all lucky to have had you brighten our days and give us such wholesome memories. Although I'm devastated that I will no longer see your smile on this side of heaven, I will continue celebrating your life and love for others. Jackie leaves behind a community that will miss her dearly. Rest easy, my friend; thank you for showing us what a well-lived life truly looks like!

May the Angels welcome you home. ☹️

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Postmaster General DeJoy Speaks Before Senate and House Committees

By Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

Louis DeJoy is a piece of work. He is also the Postmaster General of the United States (PMG) and has been so since he was appointed in May of 2020 unanimously by the Postal Board of Governors. DeJoy became the fifth Postmaster General to join the institution from the private sector. Early on in his tenure it didn't look as if DeJoy was going to survive.

When DeJoy first assumed his position in June of 2020 he decided to hit the floor running. He was going to institute massive changes quickly. The first thing he did was to abandon overtime for postal workers and to eliminate the addition of extra trips to make sure mail was delivered. He also continued the closing out of mail-sorting machines which had been instituted before he took over. DeJoy also continued eliminating mail collection boxes from the street.

These all seemed like good ideas to DeJoy because it would reduce cost. What he didn't take into consideration was the fact that mail was being delayed. There was a pandemic going on and the 2020 presidential election was coming up. There were investigations launched by the Office of the Inspector General of the USPS and various committees of Congress. The heat was on.

DeJoy had no choice by to give in to the pressure. He stated that the changes would all be suspended until after the election.

While it still appeared to some that DeJoy might be in trouble because of various charges made about his past behavior, a true metamorphosis was taking place. As one after another of the charges were dropped against DeJoy, he was cultivating relationships.

One area where DeJoy gained lots of respect was in his work to curry favor for the passage of the Postal Reform Act of 2022 among Republicans. To pass, the bill had to be bipartisan. Most people give credit to DeJoy in swinging a significant number of GOPers to guarantee the passage of the bill. Of course, the fact that DeJoy and his wife Aldona Vos have been big donors to Republican candidates for federal office for years, played a role in getting movement on the bill from Republicans. DeJoy had no problem working with Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) to gather bipartisan support for the bill.

Another area where DeJoy gained lots of respect was in the delivery of almost 400 million COVID-19 test kits by the Postal Service. But with all that good will, the ongoing problems with mail delays was something that plagued

the Postal Service landing in the lap of PMG DeJoy.

On Thursday, December 5, 2024 DeJoy testified before the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee for Oversight of the United States Postal Service. It wasn't a walk in the park for DeJoy. Postmaster DeJoy defended the agency's performance and plans, citing efforts to modernize the postal system through its 10-year "Delivering for America" initiative. He faced some tough question from Senators but none were more difficult than the questioning he received from Senator John Ossoff (D-GA). "Delivery in Georgia has been abysmal this year," said Sen. Jon Ossoff. Ossoff confronted DeJoy, "Has your tenure as Postmaster General been a success," Ossoff asked.

"Senator, I know how you feel about me, you've been quite public," DeJoy responded. "You think I'm a failure, fine, I don't.

On December 19, 2024, DeJoy spoke before the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.. DeJoy got some headlines from his response to criticism from Congressman Rich McCormick (R-GA). When DeJoy didn't like what he was hearing he covered his ears! McCormick was shocked but managed to say, "I hope you got that on camera!" ☹️

2025: Trump and the privatization of the Postal Service

By Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

Donald J. Trump, once the 45th president is soon to become the 47th president thanks to the wishes of a majority of American voters. What will this mean for the public Postal Service and postal workers?

The Washington Post recently reported that, “President-elect Donald Trump has expressed a keen interest in privatizing the U.S. Postal Service in recent weeks. . . Trump has discussed his desire to overhaul the Postal Service at his Mar-a-Lago estate with Howard Lutnick, his pick for commerce secretary and the co-chair of his presidential transition. . . Told of the mail agency’s annual financial losses, Trump said the government should not subsidize the organization.”

This is nothing new for Trump. During his first term, in April of 2018, Trump created, by executive order, the Task Force on the United States Postal System chaired by Steven Mnuchin his Secretary of the Treasury.

In June of 2018, Trump called for the privatization of the U. S. Postal Service. Trump’s administration suggested that the U. S. follow the model of the “successful” European model of privatization. Reports revealed



President-Elect Donald Trump, 78

that after privatizing postal services in the European Union, service did not improve nor were prices reduced

In December 2018, the Task Force issued its report which included recommendations for: strengthening the Board of Governors; defining the universal service obligation; reforming USPS employee compensation in a manner consistent with proposed reforms to the broader federal workforce; restructuring retiree health benefit liabilities with a new actuarial calculation that is based on employees at or near retirement age; and pursuing cost-cutting strategies that will enable it to meet the changing realities of its business model.

Postal workers need to realize what the Trump administration wanted and what that would mean for their benefits, “Freeing USPS to more fully negotiate pay and benefits rather than prescribing participation in costly federal personnel benefit programs, and allowing it to follow private sector practices in compensation and labor relations, could further reduce costs.”

Luckily, response to the report was overwhelming bipartisan and filled with criticism. But that didn’t stop Trump in his vendetta against the Postal Service. In 2020, Donald J. Trump was blaming the “Democrat” Postal Service for his loss in the presidential election. In a tweet, Trump said, “Whistleblowers reveal that the USPS is responsible for tampering with hundreds of thousands of ballots. This long time Democrat stronghold got rid of massive numbers, especially in swing states, during and

before delivery of the ballots. Well documented evidence!”

Trump made this accusation, even though the Postal Service was being run by his longtime supporter and donor, Louis DeJoy since May of 2020.

As Trump prepares to enter office on January 20, 2025, Louis DeJoy is still postmaster general, and while “Trump’s specific plans for overhauling the Postal Service were not immediately clear,” it will be happening. Trump feuded with the Postal Service as president in 2019, trying to force it to hand over key functions — including rate-setting, personnel decisions, labor relations and managing relationships with its largest clients — to the Treasury Department.”

It would be foolish to assume that Trump has softened his views on privatizing the public Postal Service in any way. The establishment of his Department of Government Efficiency, (DOGE) headed by the two notorious anti-union billionaires, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy has proven that the Postal Service remains a primary target of Trump. People who will be working on DOGE have leaked that major changes in the Postal Service will be coming as part of their work.

“With much more runway ahead of them, they may very well focus on privatization, and I think that’s our big fear,” said Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.). “That could have disastrous consequences, because when you go private, the profit motive is everything.”

APWU President Mark Dimondstein Provides Contract Negotiations Update as of December 4, 2024

Uploaded to apwu.org December 4, 2024

APWU President Mark Dimondstein updates members on the status of contract negotiations with USPS management, including new factor such as the NALC tentative agreement.



Full Transcript Below:

Union greetings, APWU family. I hope everyone had a very enjoyable Thanksgiving holiday. At a time of giving thanks, it is good to reflect on how fortunate we are to be unionized postal workers and to have the right to negotiate with postal management as we continue to bargain for a new union contract.

What follows is a brief update on the status of our negotiations. As you know, our main union contract expired on September 20th. We stopped the clock, meaning that we were not done, but we felt we were making some positive progress. By stopping the clock, as we call it, it ensures that all of our benefits stay in place.

You can feel secure that our bidding in seniority, our grievance procedure, just cause protections against unjust discipline, health and safety provisions, conversions of non career to career status, Guaranteed hours of work, along with so many of the hard won benefits won over generations of struggle, remain fully in place.

We continue to make slow but

steady progress, and are meeting with management at least once a week. We remain steadfast in our goals. We want good and fair wage increases to reflect the hard work that you do for the people of the country. We strive to end the gap between the divisive tiered pay structure.

We want to secure more career work. We want to expand postal services for the people of the country. And of course, we want to protect the great gains that have passed, such as full COLA, no layoff protections for the career workforce, guaranteed hours of work, and the 50 mile limit on accessing. The process so far is taking a similar path to the last round of bargaining.

In 2021, we also stopped the clock. Three months later, we reached a tentative agreement that went out to a vote. After approval by the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee. This round we have a new ingredient. The NALC has recently reached a tentative

agreement with Postal Management, and their ratification vote is currently underway.

The APWU Negotiating Committee has done a deep analysis of its terms, as it potentially has an impact on our negotiations as well. Our goal remains to achieve a good tentative agreement. If we don’t get there, we’ll be ready for what’s called interest arbitration. We are already working on choosing a national interest arbitrator in order to keep the process moving forward.

We will continue to give regular updates through our website, magazine, news service bulletins, social media videos like this, and podcasts. In the meantime, stay union strong. When you wear your union gear, you were telling management we are indeed united in our demands for good new contract. Union proud.

Say it loud. Solidarity forever. 🇺🇸

Honoring a Legacy: The Dedication Ceremony for the Late NY Metro President Josie McMillian

Article by Joseph Martir, Executive Vice President

The warm sunlight streamed through the windows of the New York Metro Conference Center where dignitaries, citizens, and family members gathered to pay homage to one of the nation's most influential union leaders. The dedication ceremony for President Josie Anderson McMillian marked a moment of reflection on a storied legacy and celebrated the values of leadership, service, and progress that defined her time in office.

It was a fitting tribute, held on December 6, 2024, unveiled the Training and Conference Center dedicated to President Josie Anderson McMillian. The center, a testament to their enduring impact, was carefully designed to reflect the president's core beliefs.

In her opening remarks, Joyce Robinson, Research and Education Director, a close friend to President McMillian, described her as "a beacon of hope for future generations, reminding us of the power of vision and determination."

Speakers highlighted President McMillian's many accomplishments during her tenure. From steering the Union through social injustices and equal rights, President McMillian's leadership left an indelible mark on the Union.

Former colleagues shared personal anecdotes, painting a vivid picture of a President whose commitment to Unionism was matched only by her compassion

and humility. "President McMillian believed in the power of people to change their future," said President Smith. "This dedication is not just a reflection of her legacy but a call to action for all of us."

President McMillian's family also played a central role in the event, offering heartfelt reflections on the personal side of the leader. "President McMillian was not just a statesperson but a parent, a mentor, and a friend," said Secretary/Treasurer Elizabeth "Liz" Powell. "She taught us the importance of courage, empathy, and the belief that every voice matters."

As the ceremony concluded, attendees were invited to tour the conference center, which includes a training room, three (3) meeting rooms with current interactive technology and that has the ability to be converted into one (1) large conference room. Many remarked on the inspiring nature of the tribute and its potential to educate future generations about the values President McMillian championed.

"This dedication is more than a commemoration," said President Smith. "It's a reminder of what we can achieve when we come together for a common purpose."

As the sun set over New York Metro Area Postal Union, the dedication ceremony for President McMillian stood as a testament to a legacy that will continue to shape the Union for years to come. 📖



Josie Anderson McMillian NY Metro President 1980 - 1999

Josie McMillian, the first African American woman to be an APWU Local President, was one of the first LSM operators. Her path to union activism was through organizing workers in NYC to protest the LSM conditions by shop floor actions.

Sister McMillian became a shop steward and then an officer of the NY Metro Area Postal Union led by President Moe Biller. When Moe became the President of the national APWU in 1980, Josie became President of the Local. Until 1999, she continued as the head of the NYMAPU, the largest and strongest of the APWU Locals.

She was a board member of New York City Central Labor Council, and the New York City United Way, and a lifetime member of N.A.A.C.P. Josie was a recipient of the world's, "Who's Who of Women," and "Who's Who of Black Women." She was an honorary member of the Alabama, Chicago, and the Kentucky Postal Workers Unions.

Josie was a founding sister of APWU POWER and a strong supporter of both Women and Human Rights. She was powerful, influential, and "Force to be reckoned with." When she spoke at a convention everyone listened. Josie truly believed that in "Unity there is Strength and it "If God is for you, who can be against you!"

As one of the only women and one of the few African Americans in a powerful union position, Sister McMillian was both respected and feared by labor leaders in NYC and throughout the country. She was the recipient of the world's, "Who's Who of Women" and "Who's Who of Black Women."

Josie passed away on July 24, 2019, at her home in Alabama at the age of 79. In an era when postal women were a small minority of the work force, it took courage to stand up against postal management while battling the sexism and racism in the labor movement. Josie McMillian broke through barriers that had been in place for hundreds of years. This is her legacy.

Postal Suicides

By Chuck Zlatkin, Legislative and Political Director

****Content warning: This article discusses suicide and self-harm. If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis and needs emotional support, help is available 24/7 via call or text at 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.**

The facts jump right off the page, impossible to avoid. It was bad enough that there were 47 suicides among postal workers in 2022. The figures for 2023: 201 postal suicides – a truly shocking total. That is more than double the national suicide rate for the general population. Based on the Postal Service’s reported 635,350 total career and non-career employees in 2023, the suicide rate for postal employees would be about 31.6 per 100,000 people.

Raw Story is an investigative news website that focuses on important issues that are underreported. According to them when they saw the massive increase in the suicides for postal workers they reached out to the Postal Service. Spokespeople for the Postal Service and the Postal Inspection Service did not respond to Raw Story’s multiple requests for comment. Raw Story also said that “The National Association of Letter Carriers’ president was unavailable for an interview. The American Postal Workers Union did not respond to Raw Story’s request for comment.”

In speaking with rank-and-file postal workers Raw Story investigators discovered that there has been a massive increase in robberies of postal workers in recent years.

The article quotes Erich Mische, CEO of suicide education nonprofit, Suicide Awareness Voices of Education. “Any organization, whether it’s a federal government agency,

the Postal Service, or it’s a construction company, whatever agency or company, public or private, that conversation about suicide and suicide prevention’s got to start at the top with the leadership of any organization saying we are going to make this a priority addressing the issue of suicide,” Mische said.

Mische continues, “Generally speaking, suicide rates with postal employees, I think that’s been an issue for a long time. I think you can go as far back as the last 10 or 20 years and find stories about suicide rates in terms of occupation for postal employees and actually federal employees.”

A December 2023 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called out that the suicide rate for male Postal Service clerks was 58.2 per 100,000 civilian, non-institutionalized working persons aged 16–64 in 2021.

Organizations that want to deal with this problem proactively need to reach out to it employees and let them know that if they are having a struggle with suicide ideation issues the following is available to them: “We’re going to make making resources available to help those who may be dealing with suicidal ideation, and get them the help they need. And then, as an organization, we’re going to continue to support that individual until they get to a place where they feel as though they are stable,” Mische said.

In Chicago, thirty NALC

members formed an emergency response team in March due to “concern with the letter carriers being assaulted out there on the street, issues of substance abuse, mental health issues that we saw within our craft,” Mack Julion, assistant secretary-treasurer for the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Unfortunately, the problems of suicide is nothing new in the Postal Service. In the 1980s the Postal Service in San Diego had “an unwritten policy” of discouraging employees from filing and pursuing disability claims when they are injured on the job. This practice contributed to the stress that overburdened postal employees felt.

There is the story of William Camp. He was an employee that had amassed 2,500 hours of sick leave. He was reprimanded for taking a sick day off before he started his vacation. When he came back from vacation, management continued harassing him. He couldn’t take it, so he retired. But even after retiring, Camp became more and more depressed and after a couple of weeks, Camp hanged himself.

Investigators concluded that it wasn’t management that was responsible, but possible one manager who may have gone too far. But Norman Kersh, whose postal worker brother also killed himself disagrees, “people who run post offices don’t care. They don’t have feelings for people who work in the post office.”

Happy Holidays! Christmas Party 2024



We were pleased to welcome the NY Metro members to the new conference center and event space for our annual Christmas Party. Held on December 6th, we were joined by union members from New York and New Jersey for food and festivities as we celebrated the holiday season. The evening was filled with laughter, camaraderie, and the joy of reconnecting with friends and colleagues. The party featured a lively lottery drawing with exciting prizes and a festive photo booth that brought out everyone’s holiday spirit. The New York Metro leadership would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us and helped make the event such a memorable success. Here’s to another year of unity and shared accomplishments!



POSTAL PRIDE

Biden Reappoints Anton Hajjar to Postal Board of Governors

While President-elect Donald J. Trump comments on privatizing the Postal Service, “not the worst idea I’ve ever heard. . . there’s talk about that. It’s an idea that a lot of people have liked for a long time,” President Biden has taken action to renominate Anton Hajjar, a longtime advocate for a public Postal Service, to serve on the Postal Board of Governors. This action must take place fast, Democrats need to confirm him before Republicans take control of the Senate in January. Hajjar’s presence would be far superior to those Trump will nominate to the POB in commitment to keeping a public Postal Service.

Anton Hajjar previously served on the Postal Board of Governors when he was sworn into office May 28, 2021 to fill out an existing term. Hajjar had been the General Counsel of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. He has had major experience representing unions and union workers.

Hajjar had worked for seven years at the National Labor Relations Board in the regional office New Orleans and at the Appellate Court Branch in Washington, D.C. Hajjar was a Principal with O’Donnell, Schwartz & Anderson, PC and Of Counsel with Murphy Anderson PLLC. Hajjar has written articles and given presentations to federal judges, lawyers, union officials and lay audiences on labor and employment subjects.

He has been an advisor and pro bono attorney in numerous employment discrimination cases. In 2002, he was elected to membership in the American Law Institute, and has served as a member of its governing board since 2010. The American-Arab Antidiscrimination Committee presented Hajjar with its Pro Bono Attorney of the Year Award in 2012 and a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2023.

Hajjar has a J.D. from Tulane Law School and clerked for the Honorable John Minor Wisdom of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Before law school, he was employed for three years as a U.S. Customs Inspector. Hajjar has also worked as a merchant seaman, factory worker, truck driver, laborer, and hospital attendant.

Postal News Briefs

Trump May Cancel USPS EV Contract

The future of the all-electric version of the NGDV mail carrier remains a bit murky amid reports that incoming U.S. President Donald Trump is considering terminating the existing contract with Oshkosh and Ford. USPS is slated to purchase 60,000 of in the coming years at a cost of around \$10 billion. However, as of this month, the Postal Service has only taken delivery of 93 units, versus the 3,000 that it had previously expected to have in its fleet by now.

According to the Postal Service everything is just great

Two weeks before Christmas Day, the U. S. Postal Service reported exceptional service performance during the peak holiday rush and expects continued success throughout the season. The USPS claims that it has met the challenge of the year’s peak surge in mail and package volume with expanded processing capabilities, optimized transportation strategies, enhanced operational precision and the dedication of more than 640,000 employees nationwide.

Senator Schumer in Support of Social Security Fairness Act

“I’m here to tell you that the Senate is going to take action on the Social Security Fairness Act,” Schumer said. “You’re going to find out which senators are with you, and which are against you. I’ve got all of my Democrats lined up to support it . . . and we need 15 Republicans, so let’s get them, and we’re going to have the vote. What’s happening to you is unfair, it’s un-American and I will fight it all the way.” The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) passed the House by a 327-75 vote.

APWU LOCAL BLDG. CORP

Beginning Balance October 1, 2024	— \$	745,530.25
Total Revenue October 2024	— \$	203,969.25
Operating Expenses October 2024	— \$	166,583.83
Total Net Income October 2024	— \$	37,385.42
Ending Balance October 2024	— \$	782,915.67

Beginning Balance November 1, 2024	— \$	782,915.67
Total Revenue November 2024	— \$	167,981.69
Operating Expenses November 2024	— \$	280,933.03
Total Net Income November 2024	— \$	(112,951.34)
Ending Balance November 2024	— \$	669,964.33

CALENDAR

Wednesday, January 15

5:30pm
General Membership Meeting
Via ZOOM

ZOOM INSTRUCTIONS

Members Only!

- Download Zoom App
- Enter Meeting ID #548-304-2304
- Mute audio
- Video must be on

SISTERS! As an APWU member, you are a member of NY Metro P.O.W.E.R. (Post Office Women for Equal Rights). Prior to the pandemic, all sisters were invited to P.O.W.E.R. meetings at the Union Office on the 4th Thursday of every month at 1:00pm. Because of social distancing concerns, Diane Erlanger, Director of Organization, and Chairperson of NY Metro P.O.W.E.R, told the Union Mail that we would be holding the P.O.W.E.R. meetings on ZOOM at a later time -- 5:30 pm.



NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, January 22

ZOOM Meeting ID #239-026-1053

[Follow ZOOM instructions outlined for the Membership meeting on this page.]

****For news, upcoming events and more, visit our website at nymetro.org**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Join the Union Mail!** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



We are seeking talented individuals interested in joining the NY Metro Union Mail team as writers, journalists, editors and/or photographers.



Contact Chuck Zlatkin at chuck.zlatkin@nymetro.org or **(917) 693-9427** if interested.



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