

# ***Postal Worker***

## ***West***

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## **PMG & BoG Plan To Cut Jobs & Benefits**

**WASHINGTON D.C.**– The USPS Board of Governors (BoG) has set in motion work on a plan that will resume consolidations of plants, close post offices and implement roll backs of employee benefits.

As reported in the May 2019 issue of the *PWW*, management is back with their forced realignment of the workforce. Published reports in the *HuffPost* and *Govt Exec* reveal management is developing plans that will also combine sick and annual leave, close processing plants and post offices, force employees into Medicare (so called integration), go to a non federal retirement system and eliminate a day of delivery.

The plan is expected to be completed by the beginning of August and will go through a series of revisions before being finalized. Congress is imposing deadlines for the plan.

“Many employees don’t realize that the PMG only suspended the planned consolidation of 82 plants two years ago. The Memorandum contained in the expired union contract requiring new Area Mail Processing (AMP) studies prior to implementing any plant consolidations has lapsed,” said Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

“We faced Phase 1 of the AMPs, Tour Compressions, Forced Migrations and a host of other ill conceived and poorly implemented plans before”, said the determined Coordinator. “But, what they have planned for us in the near future is going to require a determined unity on the part of all postal workers fighting in every arena- Congress, Court, Contract and Community,” said Omar.

“\$18 Billion worth of cuts will be an extra ordinary burden placed on the back of postal workers who toil everyday, often in dilapidated dirty post offices, to service the American people. Add to that the push from the White House task force to contract out mail processing, as well as, eliminate collective bargaining over wages/benefits and the OMB’s call for privatization and you have the making of a perfect storm,” warned Gonzalez.

The Union’s National Executive Board has mobilized and is developing a multi facet counter plan. All this amidst preparation for arbitration hearings over the expired contract covering all Clerk, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle employees. “We have a hell of a task before us, but with membership support we fight on and won’t give in,” said Omar

**ISSUED BY**  
**OMAR M. GONZALEZ**  
**REGIONAL COORDINATOR**

## **Fight Over Contract Leaps Forward**

The National Union is fully prepared for the next phase of the fight over a new union contract– *arbitration!*

The arbitration panel is being finalized and hearings on the CBA that covers more than 190,000 postal workers will begin soon. The National Executive Board (NEB) will be in session for the first round of hearings in Washington DC.

“These are trying times and we are faced with multiple attacks on all sides,” said Omar Gonzalez a member of the NEB.

“Far too many postal workers don’t realize what is at stake in this critical fight. We recently outlined some of the issues that are exposed to change or elimination,” said Omar.

“Let me review some again:

**Lay-Off Protections**– with the expired contract came the exposure of 60,000 current employees who are no longer protected against lay-off.

Management also wants current employees to wait 15 years before they can earn lay-off protection instead of 6 years.

For future employees there will be no lay-off protections at all if management has their way.

The Union is prepared to counter any moves to gut the protections we earned in 1971. But, arbitrators have modified our protections in the past.

*continued on page 2.....*



## ***Forced Agency Merger Could Affect Health Benefits and Retirement***

WASHINGTON DC– The administration’s push to force the merger of two major federal agencies could directly affect postal workers.

The White House wants to combine the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) with the Government Services Administration (GSA). Both agencies control aspects of federal employment including postal.

Formed 40 years ago in 1979, OPM deals with federal retirement, federal employee health benefits in addition to matters related to the Hatch Act and hiring of Administrative Law Judges.

### **Move To Check Forced Merger**

The so called “reorganization” plan was on fast track with the Administration claiming executive authority to merge OPM

and GSA. The plan, as reported by *Government Executive*, is to transfer OPM functions to GSA. However, Congress has asserted oversight of the proposal. Issues arose at a recent hearing over the legality, authority and transparency of the move to force merger.

Adding fuel to the fire, is the threat to furlough or lay off 150 employees working for OPM if Congress does not go along with the forced merger. At press time disputes were ongoing,

Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez expressed concern over the merger. “OPM factors into the daily lives of our members in ways most employees don’t realize, he said.

“Every year APWU negotiates with OPM over the Union’s health plan. OPM oversees the Federal Employees Health Benefits program and regulates coverage, premiums and other medical plan issues,” said Coordinator Gonzalez.

“OPM also processes our retirement claims, a process that can take 60 days or longer, and handles disability retirement. OPM even oversees the CFC (Combined Federal Campaign). This Agency issues rules governing political activity related to the Hatch Act and administers the examinations of Administrative Law Judges,” explained Omar. “We need to keep a close eye on this issue and we will,” he added.

## ***Issues Exposed in CBA Fight*** continued from page 1

**Elimination of Craft**– management proposes to create what amounts to a universal employee hired to work on any assignments and do all jobs. Newly hired employees would not have a craft designation which would affect seniority and classification of occupational groups. Crossing craft protections would go out the door.

There are well rounded statistics on the value of skilled labor with craft distinctions.

**Wages**– Instead of providing pay increases for a fair day’s work, management is proposing to give “lump sum” money that can not be applied to our base pay nor applied to any step increases or future pay raises. The bosses also want to eliminate COLA and Penalty OT.

It is insane that management believes we are over paid and underworked. To infer you do not deserve a pay raise is an insult. We will counter their pitiful cries of poverty.

**Forced Reassignments**– management does not want to carry over the current Memorandum of Understanding that minimizes excessing and limits management’s ability to involuntarily reassign out of an installation beyond a 50 mile radius.

The protection ,which expired with the contract, also served to allow reviews of management staffing plans to relocate employees. This restriction also helped to consider the need, the impact, and inconvenience to employees. We need to fight for this protection and we will!

**The Right To Grieve**– management wants you to get off the clock if you are going to file a grievance against them and also force the steward to be on their own time for union activity. The intent is to keep you silent and to not challenge their violations of your rights. What does the Union say about their proposals? **Nuts !!!**

These are highlights of the nonsense management is pushing in this battle. **Stick With Your Union– We need You!** “



**The MOVE You Don't Make Can Cost You Your Job !** Postal Regulations Require Supervisors Ensure Employees Use the Correct Operation Numbers When Making Clock Rings. The Data Management Uses To Cut Jobs And Excess Employees Comes From Clock Rings and Moves Made Into Operations. Workhours Are Determined By Clock Rings.

## Skewed Data Hurts Workers

In one way or another, almost all postal workers are affected by the staffing programs of management which are based on data gathered and reported via their Management Operating Data System (MODS).

Most top bosses know, but some won't admit it, that data is skewed and inaccurate. Yet, management proceeds with their wayward schedule changes and job realignments to "right size" when in reality the jobs are being 'wrong sized.'

Operation numbers serve a real purpose. They are used to report on workload, machine use, workhours and even what kind of facility is producing what kind of work. MODS is used primarily for clerical and mail handler operations.

A recent investigation by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) found there are ineffective internal controls over the use of MODs which resulted in employees not making the correct clock rings into the correct operations.

The OIG basically found fault at all levels of the postal service, work floor, District, Area and Headquarters. Significant errors, according to the OIG, would cause, under or over-estimate, staffing requirements and incur unnecessary labor and operational costs.

### Tracking Hours Using Radio Frequencies

The report makes reference to the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) which has been explored since 2016. Employee time cards will be embedded with a chip or sensor tag to automatically record the employee's operational work zone. While this may help with having the correct operation numbers input into the system there is some concern over privacy.

Most people are familiar with RFID through the use of security wallets that block radio frequencies to protect credit card information. There is currently some use of the technology related to delivery services. How the RFID time cards will be implemented and any residual issues related to the tracking of employees remain to be seen. It is expected the technology will be rolled out sometime after October.

### Overtime or Overkill?

In a somewhat related issue, the OIG issued a report on Mail Processing Overtime which found that management does not effectively manage mail processing overtime incurring \$1.09 billion. The report revealed that while there were 5,000 less employees OT increased.

Staffing and Scheduling models and the Function 1 Scheduler program triggered the rebidding of 53,000 mail processing jobs. The report cited "complexities" of processing the large number of position bids and the decrease of employee complement led to the need for OT. The OIG noted that there were over 13.6 million sick leave hours and 13 million hours of LWOP. Along with those findings the OIG reported there were 47,000 grievances over OT, an increase of appeals that cost about \$8 million.

### New Round of Disruption Coming

"Management is set to implement a new F1 Scheduler program that is suppose to accurately ensure complement levels. Our Locals need to be ever vigilant as a new round of poorly implemented staffing plans will uproot worker bids. They know their data is flawed yet they roll on with their crazed staffing computer programs. Locals need to be proactive in staffing meetings and leery of any efforts by management to ask for "canvassing" or to have "expedited bidding" as an alternative to the contractual requirements on positing and bidding," said Coordinator Gonzalez. The Region is available to assist locals!



**DAY OF MOURNING  
ADMIN LEAVE  
DEADLINE NEARS**

The deadline to take Administrative Leave in observance of the Day of Mourning honoring President George H. Bush is fast approaching.

Although the leave policies of the Employee & Labor Relations Manual (ELM 519.4) contain the provisions by which employees are granted Adm Leave, a long standing Memorandum of Understanding between USPS and the National Union outline the process.

Administrative Leave for this purpose must be granted or

used within six (6) months of the National Day of Observance or by the end of the Fiscal year which ever occurs later. Administrative Leave to be taken at a future date should be applied for by using the same procedures which govern the request and approval of annual leave per the LMOU.

“Fiscal year 2019 ends on September 30, 2019,” warns Omar Gonzalez, Regional Coordinator. “The Day of Mourning was December 5, 2018. Those eligible employees who did not take their Adm. Leave by June 5th have until September 30th to take leave,” he added. Improper denials should be grieved.

There is criteria to be eligible. Certain employees who were on OWCP, AWOL, suspensions may not be eligible as are PSEs. The MOU can be found on the union’s website.

**“Where Is My Grievance?”**

**Western Region Report Summer 2019**

The latest report issued on the Grievance Backlog indicates a steady decrease in open pending appeals in most Districts of the Region.

JASS (Joint Arbitration Scheduling System) remains the main process by which arbitrations are scheduled by postal managers and NBAs. Date Selection Forms are used in conjunction with the MOU which intended to reduce the backlog through case reviews and the arbitration of appeals not settled during those reviews.



<b>Direct Appeals To Arbitration*</b>		<b>Pending Arbitration*</b>	<b>Step 3 Appeals*</b>
<i>District</i>	<i>Open Cases</i>	<i>Pending Hearing Dates</i>	<i>Pending Meeting</i>
Bay Valley District	38	146	40
Honolulu District	2	65	2
Los Angeles	47	94	40
Sacramento	21	37	29
San Diego	15	61	29
San Francisco	21	89	9
Santa Ana	18	59	30
Sierra Coastal	13	21	22
Alaska	6	17	23
Arizona	10	90	100
Colorado/Wy	30	37	66
Nevada Sierra	14	14	28
Portland	45	73	49
Salt Lake City	5	20	15
Seattle	12	60	17

\* includes all crafts . Next report due at end of Fiscal Year 2019

## What's Hot In Safety?

### Rights Of Newly Converted PSEs

The only means by which to gain career status in the Clerk and MVS Crafts is by first being employed as a Postal Support Employee, commonly referred to as a PSE.

The process of conversion is imbedded in a Memorandum of Understanding negotiated by the National Union.

The National Union enforces conversion steps and informs the local unions of upcoming appointments to the rolls.

Hundreds of PSEs are converted quarterly not because management wants to convert, in fact the opposite is true, Management wants more flexibility and less career employees. The Union must fight for conversions.

#### Benefits of Career Status

Tenure as a PSE can be daunting but with career status comes certain benefits:

- **Life Insurance** under Federal Group Life Insurance
- **Health Insurance** under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plans.
- **Bidding** on preferred assignments and the accrual of seniority.
- **Holidays** will now be for 10 paid holidays.
- **Step Increases** that boost contract pay raises & COLA which are based on weeks working in a level.
- **Penalty Over time** for work over and beyond the restrictions on OT work paid at double time.
- **Sunday Premium** +25% working any part of Sunday
- **Sick Leave** is now earned.
- **Thrift Savings Plan** eligibility to invest in the future.
- **Transfer Rights** under eReassign throughout USA
- **Just Cause Full Protection** against unjust discipline

"These a union negotiated benefits," said Omar Gonzalez, Regional Coordinator. "We're working to improve living standards for PSEs and Regulars. It is not easy when fighting indifferent bosses who want to cut jobs," he added.

For more details visit the National Union's website.



A recent video issued by the PMG outlines her concern for heat exhaustion and urges employees to take training on how to deal with heat and protect themselves.

The video makes it appear to be focused on letter carriers. However, our MVS drivers are exposed to heat elements once they leave their cabs and should take heed on how to protect themselves when on the streets and docks.

#### What About Inside The P.O.?

It is an amazing phenomenon in the postal service, the heaters work perfectly in the summer and the AC works great in the winter but seemingly hardly ever in the right way at the right time.

Employees must report faulty AC during the summer months. Too many managers take the easy route and simply set up fans which only circulate hot air.

Employees who experience AC issues need to fill out and submit PS 1767 [ Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice ] to their immediate supervisor. Keep and copy and contact their Union representative.

Pursuant to Article 14 of the JCIM the "minimum" **cooling is 78 F**. According to the OSHA Technical Manual , the optimum ambient temperature for an office should be between 68 and 76 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Regardless, if a member believes the temperature in the building is too hot a 1767 should be filed. The temp can be taken and adjustments made. The Area can provide emergency units that can be deployed," said Omar Gonzalez, Regional Coordinator.

"If the boss ignores your safety when it comes to AC contact the Regional Office at 650-685-7402," said Gonzalez.

## **BUILDING EQUIPMENT MECHANICS UNDER FIRE**

Despite there being no final agreement on the MS-1 Handbook management has set in motion reviews of assignments intended to revert BEM jobs.

Management issued directives to their managers to begin reviewing "unsupported" positions that are vacant and directing those bosses to notify the local union in writing of the intent to revert.

The directive further stresses that so called unsupported positions that are currently filled with incum-

bents be reviewed for excessing (i.e., involuntary reassignment).

Key to this activity is that installations have an approved staffing package.

Earlier this year the National Maintenance Director reported that the parties at the HQ level were meeting on the MS1 TL5 after Beta Tests were conducted in Phoenix AZ and Manchester NH.

While discussions were ensuing USPS issued TL 6 which is also under review.

"There is no craft safe from management's attacks and we must stay alert to deal with constant disruptions and reversions," said Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

**"The Postal Service is committed to the principle that all employees have a basic right to a safe and humane working environment. In order to ensure this right, it is the unequivocal policy of the Postal Service....there must be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone at any level."**

ELM 665.24

Report incidents on PS 1767 and contact your union representative.

## ***MVS Drivers Struggle With Unsafe Lift Gates***

PORTLAND OR– The lift gates on the new trucks are proving to be beyond awkward for the safe handling of OTRs and other containers posing a hazard to drivers and retail unit personnel.

The lift gates are too small for the larger containers to be easily placed and lowered. There have been reported spills of fully loaded containers. Reports indicate this safety issue may be a nationwide concern.

The Local Union MVS Director submitted PS 1767s and filed a class action grievance over the matter. National Business Agent Jerome Pittman, conducted an onsite inspection of the situation and found serious safety concerns. The NBA has forwarded his findings to the National Union in Washington DC.

Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez followed up with an inspection and watched as a driver fought to maintain control of containers being unloaded using the short lift gate. Gonzalez submitted the matter to the Western Area Joint Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee. The minutes of the Quarter 3 JLMS&HC reveals that the Area Safety Analyst has been assigned to develop a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for handling and unloading containers on these lift gates.

"This is not enough," said Omar Gonzalez. "How this important issue was assigned to a Safety Analyst that wasn't even in attendance at the meeting is beyond me. While a JSA and SOP may help to ensure a process is in place, the fact remains that the damn lift gates are too short to be safe," said Omar

The Regional Coordinator is meeting with the National MVS Director in Washington DC to discuss what further steps can be taken to ensure the safety of all employees. *Stay tuned!.....*

