

The Philadelphia POSTAL WORKER

Vol. 32 No. 2

A Member of the APWU Postal Press Association

Second Quarter 2012

Tough Times Ahead of Us



Gwen Ivey,
President

Hello Brothers and Sisters! I cannot express enough the importance of every Postal employee knowing the politics surrounding the Postal Service. Labor is under attack! The Postal

Service is under attack! The Postal Service has made many announcements that will or may affect us in the near future. The Postal Service announced on September 14, 2011 their plans to eliminate 252 mail processing facilities. One week later September 21, 2011, a notice out-

lined service standard changes and plans to eliminate overnight service for first class and periodicals and narrow the two-day delivery range. The elimination of overnight delivery of first class mail and periodicals, as well as a reduction in the range of two-day delivery, would impose a significant hardship on postal customers. Cutbacks in the USPS mail processing network will lead to drastic reductions in service to the American people and degrading service to customers is not a path to renewed profitability.

With hard work at the national and local level, the union was successful in getting support for amendments to the

21st Century Postal Service Act (S.1789), which we feel will make the Postal Service more viable now and in the future. The amended bill has passed the Senate and now awaits further action by the House of Representatives.

The amendments the APWU supported were to maintain current service standards, protect rural post offices, maintain six-day delivery, and establish a blue-ribbon panel to examine how the Postal Service can earn additional revenue by offering new services.

Although not all of the amendments passed, some did; and we still have an opportunity to address our remaining issues when the bill comes to the floor of the House. The APWU supports amendments that would eliminate the mandate the USPS has to pre-fund future retiree health benefits, allow the USPS to recover overpayments made to its retiree pension funds, give the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) binding authority to prevent Post Office closures based on the effect on the community and employ-

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Postal Reform Legislation in Congress' Hands



Mark Reeves,
Vice President

Hello Brothers and Sisters! As you may be aware, on April 25, 2012, the U. S. Senate passed a modified version of the 21st Century Postal Service Act (S. 1789) that was described by APWU Presi-

dent Cliff Guffey as a mixed bag. The bill would provide the USPS with short-term relief by returning 11 billion dollars in overpayments to Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) pension fund to the Postal Service. Not one dime of this money came from taxpayers.

The legislation would address the current 5.5 billion dollar a year pre-funding requirement of the Postal Service for future retiree health benefits by spreading out the current 10 year payment plan to over a 40 year time-frame and reducing the 100% funding mandate to 80%. No other private company or government agency is required to make such payments.

The community would be allowed more input in the decision making process for closings and consolidations of

post offices and postal facilities, and give the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) the authority to reverse USPS decisions on these issues.

Additionally, there would be a limited protection of the delivery service standards for a minimum three year period. Protecting service is vital to preserving the Postal Service and postal jobs.

One other provision of this bill that has piqued quite a bit of interest from our members is that it would authorize the Postal Service to offer retirement incentives.

Consolidation Plans

It has been nearly 30 days since the Senate passed its version of postal reform. The May 15th 2012 moratorium on the network consolidation plan has passed and the Postal

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The Philadelphia
POSTAL WORKER

Published quarterly.

Official Publication of the

**AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS
UNION
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
AREA LOCAL, AFL-CIO
864 MAIN STREET,
DARBY, PA 19023
(610) 522-4520
FAX (610) 522-4533**

EDITORIAL STAFF

**Shelby Griffin
Editor**

**vacant
Assistant Editor**

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Mark Reeves *Vice President*
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Legal Counsel:

Willig, Williams & Davidson
1845 Walnut St, 24th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 656-3600

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Send all communication to the Editor at the above address or via e-mail to editor@phillyapwu.com.

Articles must be submitted by the second Thursday of the month. They must be typed. Letters must be signed. Name withheld upon request.

Visit our web site at
www.phillyapwu.org

Members Take to the Street

Our members passed out flyers to the public to inform them of the plight of the Post Office and asked they contact their elected officials to support our cause.



photo by Shelby Griffin

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, June 21, 2012

7:30 p.m.

864 Main Street

Darby, PA 19023

Light Refreshments Will be Served

Following Meeting: Sept. 20, 2012

No Meeting in July or August

The Check is No Longer in the Mail



**Stacey
Franklin,
Treasurer**

Hello Brothers & Sisters! The Federal government has announced that starting next year; the check will no longer be in the mail for millions of people that receive Social Security and other

government benefits. About 73 million checks are mailed each month from the federal government. The government will require people to receive payments electronically, either through direct deposit or by debit card for those that do not have a bank account. Tax refunds are exempt from this change, although the

IRS does encourage taxpayers to receive funds electronically by processing their tax refunds faster. These changes will affect people who receive Social Security, veterans' benefits, railroad pensions, and federal disability payments.

Some senior citizens are not familiar or comfortable with using debit cards and they experience a sense of security by receiving a check every month that is issued by the United States Treasury Department. The Treasury Department states that funds will be added to the debit cards monthly and they can only be used to make purchases at any retailer that accepts MasterCard. The cards will also allow one free ATM withdrawal per month and any subsequent withdrawal will be charged at the rate of 90 cents per transaction, and if the ATM machine charges a fee, the card holder will be responsible for that fee as well. The cards will be issued by Comerica Bank, a bank that has branches sporadically located in the Tri-State area. The Treasury Department has just ensured that the people that receive a fixed monthly income will now receive a pay cut attributed to these extra ATM fees and by having the card issued by a bank that has locations sprinkled here and there.

The Treasury Department reported that about 90% of people that receive these types of benefits already get their payments electronically, and new enrollees are already required to receive payments electronically. The elimination of paper checks in 2013 will save the government about \$120 million a year; social security will save \$1 billion over the next decade, but what about the immediate loss that the USPS will incur. What about the additional loss of personnel that process those checks in the impacted government agencies? Therefore, the government agencies are the only ones that will generate a savings off the backs of the same people that contributed to these taxes and of course, the employees.

One of the Treasury Department's directors stated that the paper check is out there floating in the delivery system with personal information on it and it is more susceptible to fraud. It appears to be the intention of our government to keep taking away from the postal service and other government agencies that employ dedicated employees. There is rarely an instant fix to minimize expenses and cut costs. Problems generally do not occur overnight, but before making decisions that could negatively affect government employees these officials should consider the aftermath that will occur. I would not be surprised if the processing of these electronic payments is completely outsourced to a

private company. Constantly taking away without replacing will eventually leave you with nothing. We expect this type of behavior from the private sector, but it should not be acceptable from the government. This example is just one of the many reasons that we have to exercise our right to vote. We have to show these politicians that don't have our best interest at heart that we are here, we have a voice, and we will be heard!

Teen Summer Jobs & Volunteer Opportunities

Urban Tree Connections provides teens ages 13-18 with an opportunity to learn lawn services and landscaping while earning a wage and developing trade skills. The teens work throughout the summer apprenticing under the supervision of experienced staff. For more information and to obtain an application call The Urban Tree Connection at (215) 877-7203.

Philadelphia Youth Network is offering a WorkReady program that enables teens to find summer jobs in many areas. This website offers information on various programs. To obtain an application visit (www.pyninc.org)

The Delaware State Summer Youth Program offers summer employment opportunities for teens ages 14 -20. All programs have four to ten week duration and occur between the months of June - September. For more information, please call (302) 761-8156.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is offering summer lifeguard opportunities for teens 16 years of age or older in New Jersey's state parks; training, testing and certification are free of charge. For more information, please call (609) 984-0370.

If you have children or grandchildren that are age 14 or older, volunteering not only generates a rewarding feeling, it is also viewed upon favorably by college and/or trade school recruiters. The Free Library of Philadelphia has many volunteer opportunities at the main branch and 53 neighborhood branches throughout the city, including the Library for the Blind and the Physically Handicapped. The requirements are a minimum of 14 years of age, availability to work at least 1-3 hours per week for 2-3 months, and the ability to work alone or with others. If interested, you can download an application at (<http://freelibrary.org/volserv/VolunteerAppII.pdf>) and return it to the address that is listed on the application.

If you live in the surrounding areas of Philadelphia please contact your county's office to receive information about summer jobs and/or volunteer opportunities in your area.

Cash Versus Credit Card

It is always a good idea to purchase items with cash as opposed to credit cards because you do not have to pay any

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Tough Times Ahead of Us

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ees and repeal the provision that would require arbitrators in postal contract negotiations to consider the financial health of the USPS. Please contact your representative in Congress and ask them to support the Senate version of the bill and any amendments that protect our service standards and collective bargaining rights.

With the USPS preparing to identify the plants that are slated for consolidation, the amendments on service standards are especially important; the Postal Service cannot maintain current service standards if it implements massive consolidations. At a recent meeting the USPS said it plans to eliminate 261 of 461 mail processing facilities by 2015.

"APWU members should urge House members to act on postal reform and use the Senate bill as a starting point for discussion," said APWU President Cliff Guffey. The Senate passed S. 1789, the 21st Century Postal Reform Act of 2012, on April 25, by a vote of 62-37. "Although the bi-partisan bill is not perfect, it is far better than H.R. 2309, which was approved last year by the Republican-controlled House Oversight and Government Reform Committee," Guffey said. H.R. 2309 would destroy the Postal Service as we know it by forcing extreme service cuts and by creating a 'solvency authority' that could void our contract and order massive layoffs.

Although the Senate adopted S. 1789, the legislation is

not final. The House of Representatives also must approve a bill; a conference committee must resolve differences between the House and Senate versions; both chambers must pass the conference version, and the president must sign it. The APWU urges all of our members to contact your Congressional Representative. Our national officers meet with House members to afford us the opportunity to seek improvement to the Senate bill and to stress the urgency of enacting postal reform.

The APWU is asking the House to make several improvements to the Senate bill, including:

- Provide greater relief from unnecessary and excessive pre-funding requirements;
- Improve protection of service standards, which are essential to preserving the Postal Service and postal jobs, and
- Eliminate provisions, not relevant to postal reform, which would have devastating consequences for the thousands of postal and federal employees who were injured on the job and who receive compensation from the Office of Workers Compensation.

The actions of the USPS dictate that union members must contact their U.S. Representatives and urge them to address postal reform immediately; urge them to use the recently approved Senate bill as a starting point for discussion. By

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The Check is No Longer in the Mail

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interest on your purchases. However, some items could be purchased with a credit card if you can pay the balance in full or without maximizing your line of credit. There are some advantages to using credit that many people may not have considered.

If you are purchasing electronics or appliances, many credit cards offer extended warranties. Visa and Master Card offer complimentary extended warranties and purchase protection with many of their cards. In some cases, this could double the length of the warranty that the manufacturer provides. Some cards offer purchase protection, which allows you to receive a refund if you see the product advertised at a lower price within a certain period of time.

When making travel accommodations, check with your credit card company to see if they offer travel insurance. This could save you the expense of purchasing unnecessary insurance. The services that some credit cards offer include; trip cancellation, accidental death, and emergency assistance services. You could also earn frequent flyer miles and discounts on hotel accommodations.

Using your debit card for online purchases allows the company to debit your account almost immediately and you are given a shorter amount of time to discover if fraud has occurred. In most cases, if you do not detect the fraud immediately, you will be responsible for the entire sum of money. It is always safer to use a credit card when making online purchases. Of course, do not forget that when making these online purchases to check and see if the company

gives you the option of having your package delivered via the United States Postal Service. Additionally, some credit cards offer guaranteed returns on items that get lost, stolen, or broken during shipment.

Using a credit card to pay for certain services such as contractors, landscapers, etc., is also a good idea. If you are not pleased with the work, it is easier to stop payment, withhold payment, or work out a dispute.

Although many people do not think it is a good idea to pay monthly bills, such as cell phone or utilities, with a credit card, there is another school of thought regarding the situation. If you pay a bill with certain credit cards, and you can pay off the balance without paying the interest, you can earn rewards off future purchases or earn cash back. If you pay these bills with cash or a check, you earn nothing. Of course, you can still utilize the mail when making these payments by credit.

Avoid Being Scammed

There is always someone out there trying to deceive or run a scam on an innocent person. Some of these deceitful people's methods are obvious and sometimes we instantly recognize that things are not what they seem to appear. For the most part, we tend to believe that all people have good

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National Level FMLA Arbitration Win



**Eugene
Chieffo,
Director,
Industrial
Relations**

The APWU won a national level arbitration case on April 18, when Arbitrator Shyam Das ruled that the Postal Service cannot require employees to use forms developed by the Department of Labor

(DOL) when they submit certification for leave under the provisions of the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

The APWU has consistently asserted that an employee's medical diagnosis is private health information that need not, and are not, required to be stated on the form.

The APWU FMLA Forms are once again available on line and at the Union Hall for employees to use when submitting medical certification

for leave under the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The Postal Service cannot require employees to use the Department of Labor's WH-380 forms. Arbitrator Das ruled that the DOL Forms are optional forms. The USPS must accept an employee's medical certification in any format provided that it contains all of the information required under the law.

The DOL WH-380 forms solicit information from healthcare providers beyond what is actually required under the law. The WH-380-E and WH-380-F Forms invite healthcare providers to state the medical diagnosis. The medical diagnosis and prognosis is private health information that is not required to be on the form.

The APWU forms reflect the same basic FMLA medical certification requirements so as to permit healthcare providers to furnish appropriate medical information in accordance with the law

The APWU forms are easier for healthcare providers to use, and protect against inappropriate disclosure of protected health information.

Whatever form an employee uses for FMLA medical certification, if a medical certification is incomplete or insufficient; the Postal Service is required to explain to the employee in writing what specific additional information is necessary to make the certification complete and sufficient and also to give the employee an opportunity to correct those issues.

Whistleblower Protection Act

The reporting of work related injuries and illnesses are a core employee right and retaliating against a worker for reporting an injury or illness is illegal discrimination."

In a March 12 memo, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) noted, "If employees do not feel free to report injuries or illnesses, the employer's entire workforce is put at risk," the memo points out. "Employers do not learn of and correct dangerous conditions that have resulted in injuries, and injured employees may not receive the proper medical attention, or the workers' compensation benefits to which they are entitled. Ensuring that employees can report injuries or illnesses without fear of retaliation are therefore crucial to protecting worker safety and health."

The memo advises OSHA regional administrators and

whistleblower program managers to be aware of four potentially discriminating policies employers may have regarding an employee who reports an on-the-job injury:

- Taking disciplinary action regardless of the circumstances of the injury;
- Disciplining an employee for violating an employer rule about the time or manner for reporting injuries and illnesses;
- Disciplining an employee for an injury that resulted from the employee violating a safety rule, and
- Offering incentives to not report injuries; for example, offering prizes to employees who were not injured in the previous year.

OSHA also said that the practice of linking management and supervisor bonuses to lower accident reporting could be potentially discriminatory. "Such policies could discourage reporting of injuries and could be considered unlawful discrimination," the memo stated.

Retaliation against an employee for reporting an occupational injury is a violation of Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

On Feb. 27, the U.S. Department of Labor sued the U.S. Postal Service alleging the Postal Service engaged in discrimination and retaliation against a safety specialist who provided information to an employee wishing to file a safety complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The DOL is asking the court to remedy the situation by ordering a permanent injunction against the Postal Service to prevent future violations of the law. The suit also asks for appropriate relief to the safety specialist, including the payment of lost wages and benefits, plus compensatory damages for emotional distress. In Solidarity! □



**On behalf of
all the
POWER
sisters and
brothers we would like
to thank everyone that
participated in the
Mother's Day raffle.**

The Check is No Longer in the Mail

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in them and their intentions are true. However, that is not always the case. The following information details some scams that are becoming more popular, causing innocent people grief and heartache.

ATM Scams: ATM machines have been around for some time and as the technology improves, the thieves get more creative. Criminals attach devices to the machine that reads your card and videotape you when you are entering your pin. In a matter of minutes, the thief has your bank account information and your pin, which enables that person to duplicate your card and empty out your account. You should avoid machines that stand-alone or are non-bank related. We see these machines all the time outside neighborhood stores or gas stations. If you notice a device on the machine you should contact the bank or provider immediately. Always try to cover the keypad when typing in your pin number and if you place your hand on the slot and wiggle it before swiping your card the slot should not move.

Phony pizza menus: Bogus pizza leaflets are another popular scam that was so out of control in the state of Florida, Legislators banned legitimate pizza restaurants from circulating their flyers for a while. When you are on vacation with your family, the thieves especially notice the cars with out of state license plates. They leave phony pizza menus on your windshield hoping that you will call to place an order. Once you place an order and wait for your pizza (that will never be delivered), the thieves are placing charges on

your credit card. To avoid falling prey to this scam you should check the phone book first, or call the hotel's front desk to verify that the pizza restaurant does exist.

Internet Scam: The internet can be our friend in many instances, but on occasion, it can also be our enemy. One of the popular scams on the internet is called phishing. Phishing is a way of attempting to acquire information from a trustworthy entity such as; passwords, credit card information, account information and sometimes money. You may receive an email stating, "We suspect an unauthorized transaction on your account. Please click here to verify your identity." If you receive this type of email, do not click on the link and do not reply. Banks, credit card companies, and other businesses do not ask you to verify this type of personal information via email. You can forward the message to the organization that is being impersonated, and review your account information to ensure that there are no unauthorized charges.

Facebook Scam: Facebook is a popular and highly utilized social network. Many people use this website to keep in touch with friends and share their personal experiences. Some deceitful people have even hacked into this website, causing some Facebook users to report they have received messages alleging to be from friends appealing for money

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Tough Times Ahead of Us

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meeting with House members it gives us an opportunity to seek improvements to the Senate bill and to stress the urgency of enacting postal reform.

USPS Announces Modified Consolidation Plan

The USPS informed the National APWU on May 16, 2012 that they had developed a modified network consolidation plan and now that the moratorium has expired, the plan will be implemented beginning this summer. There will be a break in consolidation activities from September through December for the election and holiday mail seasons. Following the break the first phase of consolidations will resume in January 2013 with the completion of the second phase by the end of 2014.

The Postal Service also announced an interim regulation to modify existing service standards for overnight delivery. This will change the geographic area of overnight delivery service to local areas and according to the USPS this new interim service standard will enable their consolidating activity in 2013. The interim service standard will be replaced with a permanent service standard for overnight delivery in 2014.

The UPSP has given stand-up talks to employees stating the actions taken will comply with collective bargaining agreements, Postal Service regulations and policies, and other applicable law. In these talks management is also saying it is the intention of the Postal Service to work with

its unions regarding an employee incentive offer, and they will announce details when a final decision is made. However, to date there have been no formal talks between the APWU and USPS regarding retirement incentives.

"The Postal Service's plans seem to be in constant flux", and "I hope members of Congress are paying attention. They must act quickly to prevent a severe degradation of service and massive cutbacks in the mail processing network," President Guffey said.

Critical Times

The Future of the USPS and our jobs are at stake, we are in this together and must fight this fight together. The Senate passed S.1789, 21st Century Postal Reform Act on April 25. The next phase of our struggle is in the House of Representatives. We must contact our congressional representative to take up consideration of postal reform and use the Senate bill as a starting point. In Solidarity!



Postal Reform Legislation

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Service wasted no time in putting forward a modified network consolidation plan.

On May 16th 2012 the National APWU was notified of the Postal Services intentions to begin ramping up consolidation efforts this summer with a planned break in consolidation activities from September through December 2012 for both the election and holiday seasons. Following the break they plan to resume the first Phase of consolidations in January 2013, with Phase two to be completed by the end of 2014.

You may be wondering, what does all of this mean? Well I'll tell you what it means. It means that the Postal Service has not changed their strategy just their tactics. Their goal is still to dismantle the current postal service network, close post offices, consolidate processing and distribution centers and drastically reduces the size of the current workforce. The only difference is the modified plan takes a little longer to accomplish their goals.

What can we do to stop the Postal Service from destroying itself? The Senate bill (S. 1789) moved to the House of Representatives, where it sits waiting for the action of our elected officials. There does not seem to be any sense of great urgency on the part of Congress to pass legislation that would help to alleviate the greatest financial crisis in the history of the Postal Service; a crisis I might add was Congressionally created in the first place, through the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, which was signed into law by then President George W. Bush.

The APWU and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU) has called on all Local and State organizations to meet with their Representatives to urge them to act now to save the Postal Service from financial collapse.

APWU members, the time is now to do your part to save the Postal Service. These are our jobs on the line. Contact your Representative and tell them that they need to act on postal reform now, and the starting point of discussion should be S. 1789, The 21st Century Postal Reform Act Of 2012, and not HR 2309, which was approved by the Republican-controlled House Oversight and Government Reform Committee chaired by Darryl Issa (R) CA.

State Convention News

I would like to report on the Pennsylvania Postal Workers Union (PPWU) state convention that was held in Pittsburgh, PA on May 4-6 2012, and also the Tri-State Educational Conference that was held on May 3-4 2012, in conjunction with our state convention.

Eastern Region Coordinator Mike Gallagher hosts a Tri-State Educational Conference annually at either the PPWU or New Jersey State Postal Workers Union state conventions. Union representatives from PA, NJ, and DE are invited to attend and participate in union training courses developed and presented by our Regional Coordinator and our National Business Agents from the Clerk, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Crafts.

We were fortunate enough to have National Maintenance Craft Director Steve Raymer, and National Assistant Maintenance Craft Director Gary Kloepfer teach the maintenance courses. The training provided is invaluable to better educating our union representatives in the performance of

their duties.

Once the PPWU State Convention convened, your union delegates got down to the business of the union. The purpose of the state convention is to discuss resolutions related to our Collective Bargaining Agreement and amendments or changes to our State or National Constitution that we may wish to put forward at the National APWU Convention. The point being is to set the course that we believe the National APWU should take to improve the representation that we provide to our membership through collective bargaining.

I would also like to commend our Philly delegation to the PPWU for a job well done. I am proud to report that your delegates were not only very involved and active but were major contributors to the convention proceedings. Several of our delegates were assigned to serve on committees. Robert Austin Assistant Maintenance Craft Director served on the Election Committee, Miguel Afanador Chief Steward North West Philadelphia Stations served on the Resolution Committee, and Bonnie Brown Station Steward served on the Rules Committee.

The Philadelphia PA Area Local 89 did put forth a resolution that was designed to correct the discrepancies that occur to employees who are bid assigned to NTFT positions with regard to holiday pay. For example, full time regular provisions in the Collective Bargaining Agreement provided for 40 hours per week; but an employee assigned to NTFT position, such as 4 / 10 hour days, has a potential for the loss of up to 20 hours pay per year due to the fact that our current contract states holiday pay is not to exceed eight hours pay even though you are regularly scheduled to work 10 hours. Our resolution addresses this by compensating the employee with the amount of holiday leave pay equal to the amount of hours they work or are normally scheduled to work on a holiday. Our resolution was adopted unanimously.

On the PPWU State Executive Board elections I am proud to report that two of our very own were re-elected to the PPWU State Executive Board. Jeff Renfro was re-elected as Southeast Business Agent and Greg Jackson was re-elected as Motor Vehicle Craft Director for the PPWU. □



The Philadelphia Local Delegation to the Pennsylvania Postal Workers Union State Convention hard at work.

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because they are stranded abroad and need money for a flight home. The scammers usually try to attack the accounts of active Facebook users with a lot of friends and attempt to solicit money from people with kind hearts. If a friend contacts you asking for money, call that friend first to ensure that the request is genuine. In most cases, people have sent money only to find out later that the friend did not submit the request and was never even out of the country. If you receive this type of request, inform your friend that their account has been hacked and they should report it to Facebook immediately.

Bad Check Scams: You have to be very careful when selling items, especially expensive ones, online. A common online scam is: you place an ad online selling an item for a certain price, and the buyer sends you a certified check for that item, but the check is for more than the purchase price. The alleged buyer contacts you immediately stating that an error was made and asks you to send a check covering the overpayment. Thinking that the buyer made an honest mistake you send a check for the overpayment and when you deposit the certified check the bank notifies you about a week later that the certified check is counterfeit. At this point you have paid the thief money and probably sent the item to a bogus address. If you are selling items online use a service like PayPal or wait until the buyer's check clears, even a certified check, before sending any merchandise.

The Federal Trade Commission states that successful schemes average between \$3000 to \$4000, and cause serious headaches and hardships for the innocent person being scammed. Be aware and be alert!

Rental Events

The Local has been successful in renting out the meeting room for various events. As a union member you receive a 20% discount off the hourly rate, and members that have hosted multiple events at the hall receive additional discounts. In the unfortunate event that a death in the family occurs, we have added a bereavement clause to our contract that allows you to hold a repast at the hall at a substantial discount. The facility is clean, the staff is very professional, and there is plenty of parking. If you or someone you know is looking for a hall to host an event, contact the treasurer's office. In Solidarity! ☐

