



January 25, 2025

From our President

By Royce "Ike" Mills

Happy New Year to all of you! Well another year is behind us and we survived another peak season. I hope you all have a good year in 2025. There have been a lot of things going on and one of the first things I would like to talk about is the Legislation that was passed and signed into law on Sunday January 5, 2025. The Social Security Fairness Act was over 40 years in the making and finally passed by the 218th session of Congress. This legislation did away with two very terrible laws that were in existence for far too long. The Windfall elimination provision and the Government Pension Offset rules were eliminated by this law to the applause of many affected employees. I want to personally thank all of you that took the time to call your representatives and ask them to support this legislation. It goes to prove that when the workers unite to make their voices heard we can accomplish great things.

The next subject I would like to discuss is the many hours that your Stewards have spent on the overtime grievances since October many of you have received grievance payments on your checks for Managers not following the Collective Bargaining Agreement in the overtime provisions of Article 8 and Article 11 Holiday schedules. Keep up the fight and inform your Stewards if you believe a violation has occurred. Again thank you for your support and participation in our Union, it takes us all to make it work.

The RAZORBACK SCHEME is the official voice of the Northwest Arkansas Area Local of the APWU – AFL-CIO. However, opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the APWU, Local, officials or Editor. Articles, artwork, cartoons and/or other material are solicited from member readers who wish to share their views. Although freedom of the press is recognized, contributors are exhorted not to submit derogatory material about any fellow union member or to submit any false or unsubstantiated allegation concerning management or any other individual inside or outside this organization. All letters must be signed (if hard-copied) or emailed via an identifiable, recognized screen name. Names will be withheld upon request. Send submissions to RAZORBACK SCHEME, P.O. Box 654, Fayetteville AR 72702; or email to: editor@nwaal667apwu.org

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Is The USPS In Danger of Privatization?

By Pamela Beck

Conservatives in Congress have talked of privatizing the Postal Service for many years. President Trump has also expressed interest in this idea more than once, and recently we are seeing it repeated everywhere. Is this a real threat? What about the Constitution? What are the implications for postal workers?

Let's start with a brief history lesson. Most people have heard that the post office was established by the US Constitution and Benjamin Franklin was the first postmaster. However, the postal service actually predates the Constitution by many years. As the colonies were under British rule, a postal system was established, modeled on that of Britain. Benjamin Franklin was a printer and publisher of a newspaper in Philadelphia, when the British authorities appointed him to be postmaster for that city in 1731. He ran the post office so well in that area that the British made him postmaster over all 13 colonies in 1753. In 1775, the Second Continental Congress met as the colonies were struggling to establish independence from Britain, and one item on their agenda was the establishment of an independent postal system for the emerging nation. They also named Franklin as Postmaster General.

By the time of the writing and ratification of the US Constitution in 1787, the post office was already well established in the new United States. **It is mentioned only briefly in the constitution with power being given to Congress "to establish post offices and post roads."** No details of organization, no rules, regulations, or responsibilities were established in the Constitution. I believe that the founding fathers, with their European background, considered the need for a postal system and its organization to be self-evident and understood, which of course, it was, at that time. However, this vague and brief mention of this "power of Congress" is unlikely to be enough to protect the Postal Service in our day and age.

For nearly 2 centuries, the post office was only loosely controlled by various laws which applied to its operations, while generally being used as political leverage consisting of postmaster appointments and government contracts for buildings and roads. Then, in 1970, Congress passed the Postal Reorganization Act which established the USPS as an independent agency within the executive branch of US Government. This Act made the Postal Service reliant on its own sales of products and services for funding rather than Congressional appropriations. It also established the Postal Regulatory Commission, the body responsible for regulating and overseeing the USPS. Decades later was the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, and most recently, the 2022 Postal Service Reform Act. These are the primary laws governing the USPS today and they obviously establish a precedent that the Postal Service falls under Congress's purview.

As far as the legality of privatization, I'm no lawyer, but I don't see this being prevented by the Constitution. Congress has clearly established control and has authored all of the guidelines under which the Postal Service currently operates. Therefore, if Congress chooses to privatize, it could be done, by Congress. The President alone may not have the authority but that is probably a moot point in our current situation.

For postal employees, and many customers as well, it often feels as if the Postal Service is a ping-pong ball being bandied about by politicians for their own questionable purposes without regard to the needs of the public, or postal employees. In the 18th century, it was recognized that a postal system was vital to the newly developing country as it was to any modern society of that time. The postal system was needed for dispensing information and news to the public and for uniting the newly formed states and territories. Today, in the age of television, radio, rapid travel, and internet, it often feels as if the postal service has become obsolete. However, we still provide many important services to society that would become much more expensive under a for-profit business model, if they could be maintained at all. Consider library rates for library mail, prescription meds by

mail, and non-profit rates for charitable organizations. Our “every house, every day” service standard will be the first to go in a for-profit system.

So what is to be the future of the Postal Service in America? The public and Congress must decide the role of the postal system going forward. Is it to remain a public service, based on the needs of the people? Or will it be transformed into a profitable business? **It cannot practically be both.** A purely profitable business plan would result in many reductions of service for the public, and many price increases. It is possible, however, that with clear objectives and the right leadership, it could be operated to **break even** as the public service it was originally meant to be.

As for the implications facing postal employees, there are many. We would almost certainly lose our status as federal employees under any privatization plan. This last open season for health insurance seemed to be a foreshadowing of this as we were moved from the Federal Employee Health Benefit system to the new Postal Service Health Benefit system. Many wondered if this was just the first step in cutting the Postal Service loose altogether.

There are many differences in labor law for federal and private sector employees. While we may be able to maintain our union representation, there would be many changes involved in a transition to the private sector. The unions would have to navigate all of the legal challenges that would result. Our unions would likely be at a disadvantage in negotiating with a new entity. The APWU is currently still in contract negotiations and the other three major postal unions have contracts that expire within the next two years. Not having a current contract in place or having one due for renegotiation would seem to be a definite disadvantage in any transition. Privatization could result in loss of jobs, lower wages, or reduction in benefits for the approximately 600,000 postal employees that currently enjoy the status of federal employees.

We must be vigilant going forward in making our voices heard by our representatives in congress and the general public as well. Our best outcome is to remain a federal agency, with the understanding that we provide a much needed public **service**. The general public mostly loves the Postal Service, but public opinion has been swayed by the constant talk of postal shortfalls, bailouts, and imminent bankruptcy. Many see privatization as inevitable. We must convince them that privatization will not be in the public’s best interest. We, as union employees, must present a united front to advance the vision that the Postal Service can succeed, **as a non-profit public service**, given clear and reasonable objectives and the proper leadership.

January Meeting Notes

2 officers and 3 stewards were present. Total attendance 10 members.

President's report:

The Social Security Fairness Act has passed Congress to become law. In some cases it will be retroactive to a certain date. This will benefit many people expecting government pensions.

There have been many over 3 overtime grievances recently. Thanks due to Miranda for her diligence.

Attendance at the January party was very low. Some fault may be ours for poor communications, but we need to obtain more feedback from membership on what sort of social events may be more desirable, and when.

2 job reversions or abolishments in Springdale to be replaced by a new Lead Clerk position and possible new Window position.

Plant is dealing with attendance issues, cracking down again. Also lots of recent accidents, please be safety minded. Check functionality of equipment BEFORE you fill it! Does it open? Close? Roll? Unsafe equipment leads to accidents. Do not overfill equipment. General rule for OTR's and APC's is $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Always be mindful of the next person who will be handling that mail or equipment. Make it easier for them, not harder.

New steward in Springdale, Cheryl Sharum. Sheldon transferred to Prairie Grove.

Next meeting we will be choosing delegates for Spring Business Meeting of State APWU, and Tri-State convention. Please be present at meeting if interested.

FROM THE EDITOR:

This is my first issue of “The Razorback Scheme” for this term, although I was editor once before, many years ago. I hope to publish more frequently than has been the norm for the last few years, but I do need contributions. Anyone may contribute articles, letters to the editor, cartoons or other, as you see fit. You do not have to be a union officer, or even a member. Articles may reference any topic relevant to union interests. I am not going to publish deadlines. Your article will appear in the next publication. I am required to publish quarterly, according to the Local’s Constitution, but may publish more often if contributions are forthcoming. The publication going forward will be primarily digital, with printed copies available in each workplace represented by the Local. If you wish to receive an email copy, please send your email to the address below. Emails will not be used for any other purpose or sold or forwarded to any other organization. If you wish to receive a print copy to your personal address, you may request that as well. Please send all requests and contributions to:

EDITOR@NWAAL667APWU.ORG OR EDITOR, PO BOX 654, FAYETTEVILLE, AR 72702

Please also check out the Local’s official website at NWAAL667APWU.ORG. Find announcements of upcoming events, contact info for your steward and officers, as well as archived copies of The Razorback Scheme. Scan QR code for quick access to website.



Join YOUR Union for our next Union Meeting!
Northwest Arkansas Area Local 667 – APWU

Sunday 1:00 PM, February 9, 2025

at FOGHORN'S RESTAURANT in Springdale
1100 48th Place, Springdale AR, (Near Exit 72, I-49 & Sunset)

Soft drinks & Snacks provided!
Door prize!
Latest information on work and contract issues!