

# *Iowa State Association of Letter Carriers*



## *President's Report*

May 2008

I recently attended the Hawkeye District Cluster meeting in Des Moines with our sister union's State Presidents and Hawkeye District Managers and Larger City Postmasters.

For the 25<sup>th</sup> straight year of my postal career, the post office is losing money and not making budget. Hours were spent pouring over data: Overtime and Penalty overtime are out of control; Sick leave is ravaging the district along with injuries at work. Accidents are occurring everywhere at record pace; Even with the upcoming postage increase, USPS is projecting a deficit this year; There's more carriers (including TE's) and of course, mail volume is down.

Hello! Did anyone besides us go outside this winter - the worst winter in my career? Snow seemingly every other day, followed by an ice storm! Of course accidents were up - management is lucky that we all didn't fill out accident reports every time we fell this winter as they would have had to construct a new building for the paperwork. Overtime and penalty overtime are up? Again, not only winter, but is there any large office staffed with as many carriers as we had just a few short years ago? I think not. Sick leave usage on the rise? Of course, besides forced overtime and no time off, management in their ultimate wisdom has decided to discipline carriers who call in sick (unscheduled), so why call in one day, better safe than sorry and call in two or three. OWCP works so well that carriers hurt this past winter, may have surgery by this summer and be back to work as early as next winter! Mail volume is down, including DPS. Management has told us for years that more DPS does not take any longer on the street, but of course now, less volume should take us less time - give me a break! How much time has been added just because of scanning! Scanning parcel, accountable's and of course MSP points. Bar-codes on every parcel so that a carrier has to study each package, fumbling with the scanner in inclement weather (including continually wiping them dry in the rain so that it will work). Does anyone understand that we have been given new policy, new rules, new regulations and new duties on a seemingly weekly basis? Lastly, has anyone else looked at the price of gasoline!

While you may read the above paragraph, dripping with the sarcasm that was used when writing it, there are truly some things that we need to be concerned about. Some of these numbers are important. None of us want to be injured or see our brothers and sisters injured. Let's truly take the time and work safely. Mail volume is down, not only because of the internet, but because of the recession we're now in. We connect with the public every day,

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ISALCso let's push carrier connect. Probably my main concern leaving the meeting was the feeling that many of the managers and postmasters may try to "lead" their employees thru the use of discipline.

While very few suggestions were made to either improve the numbers or save money, I've got a couple:

1<sup>st</sup>. I heard last evening from an oil expert that gas may go as high as \$5.00 per gallon by next year. Isn't it about time that we look into using some electrical vehicles or hybrid's? My great grandfather delivered beer in Dubuque in an electric truck in 1904. Wind Turbines could be used to not only recharge electric vehicles, but supply electricity to our buildings. At times I believe it's windy enough at the westside station in Dubuque to power the entire state.

2<sup>nd</sup>. Lets get back to our core function. Let's sort and deliver the mail! How many countless, unnecessary reports are truly needed, to be reviewed by how many countless and unnecessary managers. Let's get back to basics and get the mail delivered!

3<sup>rd</sup>. The post office can save an enormous amount of money just by not sending crap in the mail to my home. I won't read it. Take the "Area Update" and put everyone working on it back to work. Quit sending me things on sexual harassment at home - I get it!

Ok, so, now that I've vented - As I end this article, we're less than two weeks away from our first "Spring Training", which replaces the State Convention, which is now on a biannual schedule. We have a full agenda ranging from legislative to grievance handling to a report from National Executive Vice President, Fred Rolando. Hopefully I'll see many of you there.

After proofing this article I find that I may agree with Barrack Obama - I may be bitter.

Mike Birkett

President,

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