

National Business Agent's Report

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After nearly 36 years in the Postal Service, I thought that I had seen and experienced just about everything imaginable. But nooooooooooooo! Management continues to amaze and anger me with their approach to dealing with issues. Their latest antics in response to our financial difficulties have set new standards for bizarre behavior, preposterous policies and stupendous stupidity. Let me hit some of the "highlights" for you.

As you know, we have been working jointly with the Postal Service to develop new sources of revenue through the Customer Connect Program. This is a very worthwhile and successful endeavor that has raised an additional 500 million dollars to help bolster the Postal Service's bottom-line. Given how hard we have been hit by the current recessionary cycle, you would think that management would be doing all they could to retain our current customers while soliciting new business. Well, you would be wrong. In one district, management has embarked on several new initiatives which seem designed to alienate our customers and ensure that no new business comes our way. First of all, they sent out letters to businesses that are closed one day per week, informing them that they will have to put up a mail receptacle so that the carrier can deliver their mail that day, instead of holding it in the office for delivery on the next business day as they have been for several decades. Management further stated that if they were not in compliance with this dictate by October 1, they would start holding the businesses' mail for pickup and return it to the sender after 10 days. Besides the cost of erecting a receptacle and the implications for the safety and security of the mail, the fact that management would threaten business customers with non-delivery of their mail if they refuse to accept poorer service is absolutely mind-boggling! I'm sure these businesses will be **very** receptive to utilizing more of our services for their mailing needs. **NOT!!!** We are already hearing through the grapevine that UPS has been in touch with many of these businesses to show them how their products and services can help them to deal with this situation.

In the same district, different city, many businesses were significantly impacted by the severe flooding in the Spring. It took them a considerable period of time to recover to the point where they are ready to move back in and open their doors to their customers. The latest estimate from the business community is that 95% of the affected businesses will be reopening. Now, you would think that the Postal Service would be welcoming these customers back to the fold and doing everything they could to assist the transition. Well, you would be wrong again! The Postal Service is exploiting this disaster and using it as an opportunity to provide poorer service. Management sent a letter to the businesses, informing them that the Postal Service will no longer provide door-to-door service, despite the fact that they have done so since these businesses first opened their doors. Instead, they are offering them one of two options: pay for a mail room on the ground floor of the building where they are located or the Postal Service will set up a mail room for them in a separate building, offsite. This is clearly another example of a policy that will ensure that these customers will remain loyal to the Postal Service brand. **NOT!!!** Is it just me, or has management gone above and beyond their usual lack of intelligence in developing these policies?

Yet another misguided (that's a polite term) policy has been dealt with successfully through the grievance procedure. Due to a serious dog attack against a carrier, management moved everyone's mail delivery for a specific area into cluster boxes. Despite the procedures outlined in the POM (Postal Operations Manual) and the fact that the dog in question had been destroyed, management refused to restore the customers' service. They would not listen to us, so the Step B Team had to enforce the contract. We are proceeding with grievances on the other issues cited above as well as contacting the appropriate senators and representatives. Hopefully, we can convince someone with enough authority to force management to use some common sense when formulating policies.

An equally disturbing trend is management's determination that the contract is no longer applicable, given our current budgetary problems, and the subsequent increase in grievance activity that this attitude and approach has generated. Additionally, local agreements that are jointly negotiated and signed apparently do not have to be honored by

management, if they perceive it is not in their best interest to do so. Grievance activity is at an all-time high, involving numerous issues such as reversions, minors and inspections, DOIS, TE dismissals, mandatory and unauthorized overtime, staffing, withholding, etc. All too often, these grievances generate additional activity because management refuses to provide steward time, documentation and meetings; in other words, they violate Articles 15, 17 and 31 by refusing to abide by the Dispute Resolution Process. Of course, this behavior belies management's arguments regarding our financial crisis, since it costs us so much time, money and resources that could be better applied to strengthening our bottom-line. A case in point is a recent count and inspection which did not involve the Co-Leader Process. Management's violations of the M-39 were so blatant and numerous that they will, ultimately, have wasted the money to conduct the inspection as we pursue an appropriate remedy through the grievance procedure.

There is no question that mail volume is down and that the Postal Service is being impacted significantly by the overall economic downturn in this country. A projected \$2.7 billion loss this fiscal year and a projected \$5.4 billion loss for next fiscal year do not bode well for our ability to protect letter carrier jobs and wages. However, if management truly wishes to work in a cooperative manner on this issue and they want a buy-in from letter carriers, they cannot continue down the current path. They must agree to work within the four corners of the contract as the basis for any joint efforts. We will keep you apprised of any further developments.

Vote November 4! Vote for real change; change we can believe in; change that will effectively address the disastrous effects of the last eight years, put us back on track to rebuild the middle class and prioritize the issues and concerns of working men and women over the greed and selfish interests of the wealthy elite.

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