

US postal union extends deadline for contract vote—due to problems with mail-in balloting

Brian Green, Tom Hall
17 January 2025

City letter carriers: Tell us how you're voting on the contract and why by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

The union covering 205,000 active city carriers at the United States Postal Service has announced a two-week extension to voting on a new contract—ironically, due to delivery issues with mail-in ballots.

The National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) announced the extension to voting, originally scheduled to last January 13, to January 27. The reason stated was “due to delays in the Postal Service delivering ballots in some locations and to ensure adequate time for replacement ballots to be delivered and returned.”

That even ballots for a postal contract are being affected by delays underscores that the USPS is under massive assault. Frankly, the NALC contract would only continue and deepen this. Its provocative 1.3 percent annual wage increase has outraged workers, and momentum is clearly building for its defeat.

The contract is bound up with the misnamed “Delivering for America” restructuring program now underway. Its aim is the destruction of the post office as a public service by cutting tens of thousands of jobs, closing more than 1,000 local post offices and imposing greater delays on mail deliveries.

The program has already had a disastrous impact, sparking scandals as mail has been backed up at sorting and distribution centers for weeks, including time-sensitive mail such as results for cancer screenings.

The ultimate aim is to privatize the USPS, which the incoming Trump administration intends to carry out. This is the tip of the spear for a campaign of vast looting of government assets by the corporate oligarchy that Trump represents. Elon Musk, head of the so-called “Department of Government Efficiency,” said he intends to cut \$2 trillion per year in federal spending.

With a 2024 revenue of nearly \$80 billion, it would be a very attractive for-profit acquisition for Postmaster Louis DeJoy's cronies. In 2011, Forbes ranked the post office as 35 out of 500 companies if it were privatized.

Building upon his predecessor Biden, Trump is preparing the deepest attacks on the social and democratic rights of the working class in history.

Postal workers must prepare for a struggle against this government by organizing and expanding the US Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. Demanding an end to privatization and vast improvements to working conditions, postal workers must link up with workers around the world, including in countries where postal services are also under attack. 50,000 workers at Canada Post struck late last year against massive cuts, before being ordered back to work by the government, and in Britain, Royal Mail workers are fighting a sale to billionaire Daniel Kretinsky.

USPS workers must also link up with workers fighting similar automation-driven layoffs such as at UPS, the auto industry and across the entire “private sector.”

The development of independent organizations, unconstrained by union officials, is necessary because the bureaucrats are working with management. Rank-and-file committees provide workers real decision-making power, fighting for the principle that the final authority rests with workers, not the apparatus.

It should be recalled that the first attempt to fully privatize the US post office under Nixon in 1970 was defeated only through a massive wildcat strike, in defiance of both anti-strike laws and conciliation by union officials.

Today, the union bureaucracy openly support Delivering For America. NALC President Brian Renfroe falsely claimed to WSWs reporters last year

that job cuts would not take place under the new deal. NALC also went behind workers' backs to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to establish an invasive new monitoring system, the Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP), which automatically writes up workers for "stationary events" while on their routes. This computerized harassment program contributed to the heat-related death of Dallas-area letter carrier Eugene Gates in 2023.

The other postal unions are doing the same thing. The National Rural Letter Carriers Association has signed off on a new compensation system that has slashed wages by tens of thousands of dollars per year, and the American Postal Workers Union, which covers postal clerks and other "inside" positions, has done nothing to seriously oppose facility closures and consolidations.

The delay in voting and the issues behind it also raise questions about the integrity of the vote. It should be recalled that the 2022 United Auto Workers union leadership election, also conducted via mail, resulted in more ballots returned as "undeliverable" than were actually cast. Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who ran for UAW president against the bureaucracy, has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Labor.

The APWU's last contract vote was marred by a similarly low turnout, with only 36,032 out of around 200,000 members casting votes in favor of the deal, or 18 percent.

This poses the need for rank-and-file oversight over the balloting, including the mailing, collecting and counting of ballots.

But the vote is only one aspect of a wider process that is totally illegitimate. Even if the contract is defeated, the issue will then go to binding arbitration because of anti-worker laws—flagrantly violating the First Amendment right to free speech—which ban USPS and other federal workers from striking.

In other words, for USPS administrators it is "heads I win, tails you lose." Either workers must accept the contract or, if they reject it, it will then be imposed by an arbitrator with minor changes. It should be recalled that in the struggle against railroaders in 2022, the federal government used a Presidential Emergency Board and then an act of Congress to shove a sellout contract down workers' throats.

If workers are to win their demands, they cannot

accept this framework which binds them hand and foot. The union bureaucracy upholds this system because it gives them ammunition against a restive rank and file. Meanwhile, the new government headed by convicted criminal Donald Trump, will violate the US Constitution whenever it suits their purpose.

The development of rank-and-file committees is the only viable solution to this false "choice" between accepting either the contract or binding arbitration. The Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee gives workers a forum to discuss strategy and organize all action which they see as necessary in order to save USPS and the jobs of hundreds of thousands of postal workers.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact