

Postal unions unite against privatization

By [Joseph Piette](#) on March 29, 2014

In the face of unprecedented attacks from Congress, corporations and postal management, the four major postal unions have created a fightback coalition with the goal of saving the people's postal service. The presidents of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU) and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA) signed a proclamation on March 11, pledging to work together:

"We stand for a public Postal Service, enhancement and expansion of service, and protection of good union jobs in our communities. We stand with the people of our country in defense of their right to a universal postal service operated in the public interest."

Among their demands:

- Maintain six-day and home delivery.
- Protect and restore service standards and mail processing facilities.
- Maintain full-time, full-service public post offices in every community.
- Oppose the subcontracting of work and privatization of services.
- Expand postal services to include basic banking, notary, check-cashing and other services.
- End the corporate welfare of excessive pre-sort discounts.
- Form a common front in the fight for genuine postal reform legislation
- Organize joint actions and speak in a united voice.
- Unite with other labor unions in defense of the rights of postal workers and all workers.
- Encourage joint efforts of our union members at the local level.
- Support maximum cooperation in the next round of contract negotiations.
- Build an alliance with the American people in defense of the public postal service.

Protest Staples

The United States Postal Service is currently testing pilot programs at over 80 Staples stores in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, California and Georgia. These programs put postal retail operations in Staples stores and staff them with low-wage, high-turnover Staples employees. "We support the expansion of customer access to USPS services, but we insist that postal work must be performed by uniformed postal workers who have passed a background check, taken an oath of office and are accountable to the people," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. (APWU Web News Article #050-14, March 11)

Nationwide protests against Staples are happening at the same time as the office products company is closing 225 stores, whose owners are shifting its business further online. As Workers World Contributing Editor Fred Goldstein wrote, Staples cutbacks are "aimed at getting rid of workers and store facilities" as it competes with Amazon and Office Max for higher profits.

Handing over public postal services to a private company that can close stores with no public input is bad

for both postal and Staples workers, and the adjacent communities. It also points out how intertwined workers' struggles are today.

In nature, harming one species has consequences for other parts of the biosphere and environment. In totality, the health of nature depends on the well-being of all its diverse parts. So too in human society. Whether it's privatization, immense inequality, mass incarceration, low wages for millions of workers, or racist and sexist corporate or government practices, all poor and working people are ultimately affected when one section of the working class is harmed.

Solidarity builds unity

Workers from all four postal unions acting together can go a long way in defeating corporate plans to privatize the USPS. Expanding the struggle to the community makes it more likely the working class will win.

One reason the United Auto Workers lost the vote for recognition in the Tennessee Volkswagen plant in February was the union's failure to involve the community in their organizing drive. Wealthy enemies of the union and the corporate media inundated Chattanooga residents with lies and misinformation about the UAW organizing drive. Strong union outreach to the community and unity between union and community organizers could have made those lies ineffective.

Postal workers deliver mail in every community. We patronize McDonald's, Subway, Walmart, Staples and other workplaces that pay poverty wages — the wages we would be forced to work for if privatization took place. Instead of just fighting defensively, postal workers should open an offensive by joining the fight to raise the minimum wage and for unionization.

If postal workers want community support, we should support struggles for higher wages, for fair funding of education, against racism and sexism, and so on. In turn, community members will fight alongside postal workers against postal privatization because a people's post office benefits the whole working class.

The author is a retired letter carrier.