



Workers' Rights Board Report
The Crisis Facing the US Postal Service
Portland Jobs with Justice

Workers' Rights Board Report

The Crisis Facing the US Postal Service



Members of the Hearing Panel *(Organizations listed for identification purposes only)*

State Senator Chip Shields, Panel Chair has served North and Northeast Portland in the Oregon House and Senate since 2005 where his focus is on living-wage jobs, equity for small businesses, criminal justice, health care for all, and full school funding. In the 2009 legislative session, as co-chair of the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways & Means, Shields protected services for domestic violence survivors, funding for drug and alcohol treatment, and investment in pre-apprenticeship training for women and people of color. Prior to his legislative service, Shields was the founding director of Better People, a Northeast Portland job center for ex-convicts. In the 2011 session, Shields chairs the General Government, Consumer and Small Business Protection Committee, where he has focused on making health insurance companies justify their premium increases.

Jon Bartholomew works for Oregon State Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) as an Advocate on budget transparency, corporate accountability and democracy issues. Previously he was the Associate Director of Media and Democracy for Common Cause based in Portland, Maine. In that role he directed national and state chapter activity for Common Cause

on media reform issues. He served on the boards of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections and the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition. Prior to this, Bartholomew was the Communications Director for the Maine Citizen Leadership Fund and the Dirigo Alliance in Maine. He also worked for three years for Citizen Action of New York leading their Clean Money/Clean Elections campaign and staffing the Coalition for After-School Funding. While living in Washington State, he was a field organizer for Planned Parenthood of Western Washington for three years, and earned his Masters of Public Administration from the University of Washington. He has been involved in many political campaigns through the years, both for candidates and on ballot measures.

Geri Washington was elected to the Multnomah Education Service District (MESD) Board in 1999. She has been a resident of Portland all her life, graduating from Grant High School. Washington is active in community environmental justice issues and serves on a number of community and statewide committees and task forces. Washington was MESD Board Vice Chair in 2003-2004 and Board Chair in 2004-2005. She served as an Ex-officio member of the Oregon School



Sue Canfield 27 year letter carrier

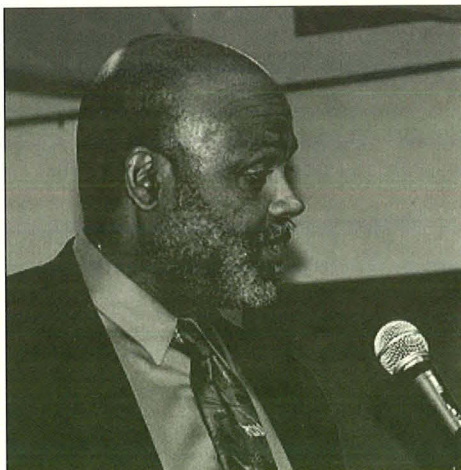
"I have watched the level of service diminish with no end in sight... The constant cycle of pivoting routes, that is breaking up a vacant route and giving many carriers a piece of the route, on a daily basis, takes a toll on the business customers..."

Board Association Board of Directors in 2009-2011 and on the Legislative Policy Committee at the same time. She was the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts Board chair in 2009-2011 and the OAESD co-chair of the Legislative Committee in 2007-2009. She has worked as a union organizer and staff for a number of non-profits in the Portland area. She is currently on staff with Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Don Oman grew up in Scappoose in a Longshore family. He went on to become a Journeyman Construction Millwright (Carpenters' local 1857) and a Secretary of the local union. He was one of the founders of the Plant Closure Organizing Committee and the Building Trades Safety and Health Program in Oregon. In 1983, with his business partner Peter de Garmo, he founded Pastaworks, a local ethnic food and wine store in East Portland. In 1997 he left Pastaworks to open a wine importing and distribution business in the state of Oregon for the wholesale trade. He lives in east Portland with his wife of 31 years, a community college teacher and union member. He has two grown sons living in Portland.

Rev. John Schwiebert is a minister with the United Methodist Church. He is the pastor of Metanoia Peace Community, a reconciling congregation of the United Methodist Church. In 1985, he helped found the new congregation that emphasizes an uncompromising commitment to radical Christian discipleship, including active devotion to God's kingdom of justice and peace. Metanoia is very active in the peace movement, in grief counseling, in workers' rights advocacy and support for the most oppressed in our community. Prior to the formation of Metanoia, Schwiebert was pastor at Lincoln Street United Methodist Church.

Bill Bigelow taught high school in Portland for almost 30 years. Between 1991 and 1993, he led workshops with teachers throughout the country using the Columbus myth to draw attention to racial biases in the school curriculum. He is the curriculum editor of the education reform journal, *Rethinking Schools*, and is the author of *Strangers in Their Own Country*:



Isham Harris 34 year letter carrier

"[We face the] perilousness of after dark delivery: an unsafe physical environment — broken sidewalks, hanging tree branches, and crossing unlit streets. After dark delivery presents an emotional trepidation such as will I, the carrier, be mistaken as a thief by the customer..."

A Curriculum Guide on South Africa (Africa World Press, 1985), and *The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States* (with Norm Diamond, Monthly Review Press, 1988). He has authored or co-edited six books with *Rethinking Schools: Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice* (1994), *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* (1998), *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice, Volume 2* (2001), and, with Bob Peterson, *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World* (2002), *The Line Between Us: Teaching About the Border and Mexican Immigration* (2006), and *A People's History for the Classroom* (2008). Bigelow has also authored several teaching guides for films and videos, including most recently for the Academy Award-nominated films, *Regret to Inform* (1998) and *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*.

Testimony provided by

Cara Bolles, customer

John Stubenvoll,
Oregon Food Bank

Paul Knauls, customer

Gloria McMurtry, customer

William Beaulieu,
small business mailer

Sue Canfield, letter carrier

Isham Harris, letter carrier

Karen Staats, letter carrier

Anil Nath, transitional employee

Robert Keys, transitional employee

Anonymous, transitional employee

Helene Wesley,
transitional employee spouse

Kathy Lemm, letter carrier spouse

Ken Wilson, letter carrier

Patty Olson, window clerk

Kevin Card, letter carrier

Willie Groshell, letter carrier

Father Robert Krueger,
Catholic priest

Kate Brown, Secretary of State



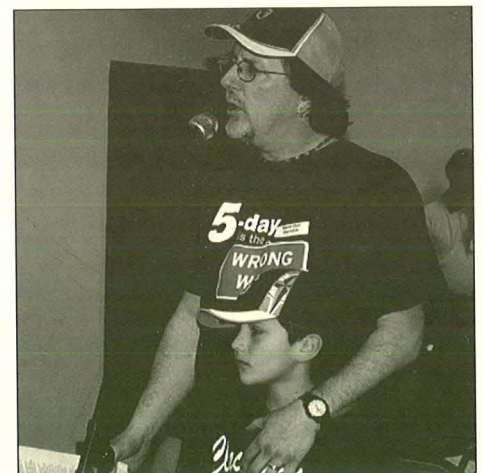
Karen Staats 16 year letter carrier

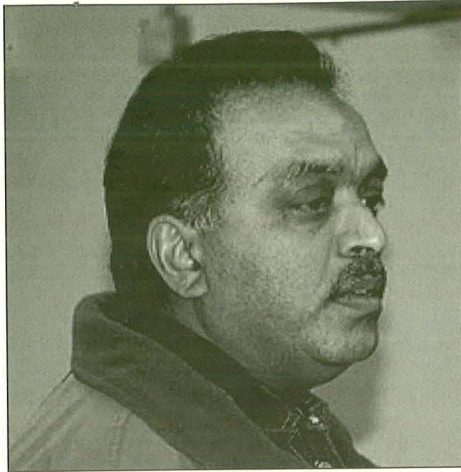
"...I continuously worked six days a week, up to 12 hours a day. It was very difficult to take any time off... Since my surgery I have been pressured to work way before my foot was healed and subsequently reinjured it..."

"Pressure to wring out 5 or 10 minutes from a carrier's time creates a contentious work environment. To be berated, doubted, criticized, and overworked on a daily basis harms the employee. When you harm a large percentage of the employees, you surely harm the business."

Ken Wilson 26 year letter carrier

"Working late most nights has kept me away from my family. Nights around the dinner table are scarce; helping my kids with their homework is almost non-existent..."





Anil Nath 3-term “transitional employee”

“A TE in the US Postal Service is about no hope, no benefits, no future... During three and a half years of service I have worked very hard, with long days, long hours in cold, rain, hot sun, and in snow and sleet. I have been bounced around like a ping pong ball from one station to another. I've worked in pain and suffering when I was sick or injured... I hope that the USPS would appreciate the hard work of TEs and hire us on as career letter carriers so we can receive all the benefits we deserve.”

Background

In late 2010, letter carriers from the U.S. Postal Service brought their concerns about deteriorating customer service and substandard working conditions to the Portland Area Workers' Rights Board, a project of Portland Jobs with Justice. For several years, the letter carriers had been bringing these grievances to USPS management through their union, the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), Branch 82. They had also sought assistance from US Congressional Representatives from the Portland area. Their concerns included:

- The understaffing of most Portland post offices, due to a more than three year hiring freeze on career employees, leaving some offices with up to 25% of delivery routes without a regular letter carrier;
- The breaking up and parceling out of these “vacant” routes leading to mandatory overtime; late, irregular and after-dark delivery of the mail; and longer lines and waits at the retail windows;
- The hiring of temporary “transitional” employees (TEs), who work without a regular schedule or assignment, at lower pay and without the benefits of a career letter carrier;
- National USPS management's threat to cut mail delivery to five or even four days per week and to close from 2,000 to 17,000 community post offices;
- The long-term financial health of the USPS in the internet age.

The Portland Area Workers' Rights Board convened a panel to investigate the situation. After meeting with letter carriers and representatives of the NALC 82, the panel decided to hold a public hearing to listen to testimony from letter carriers, clerks, customers, and mailers. The Workers' Rights Board invited Portland Postmaster Shawneen Betha, District Manager Kim Anderson, and Western Area USPS VP Sylvester Black to attend and provide their perspective, but they chose not to attend. The WRB also invited Portland area US Congresspeople to send representatives. Ed Hall, the labor liaison for US Senator Jeff Merkley, attended.

Summary of Issues raised in Testimony

Deterioration of customer service

Cara Bolles, a postal customer who had called the NALC 82 office to complain, provided written testimony. She emphasized the problem of irregular delivery due to understaffing: "...Over the past six months or so the service that I have been receiving has been less than satisfactory. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it has eroded to the point of complete and utter disrepair."

Ms. Bolles explained that her regular letter carrier, Jeff, is on medical leave and about to retire.

Why hasn't the USPS replaced Jeff with a regular carrier?... Currently, we have approximately three to four different carriers who all seem to feel differently about the various dogs who live on our short block. On any given day, I might receive my mail anytime from 9 am until 5:30 pm...my mail now comes sporadically – every several days – with handwritten notes on one important piece of mail or another claiming "Door Open" or "Dog"...it seems to me as a consumer that the USPS would... replace my carrier with an employee who would then be able to deliver my mail in a timely manner on a regular schedule.

...I could choose to have all of my bills come to me via the internet, read all of my magazines on line and forgo all of the services that USPS has to offer...If this type of customer service continues, sadly there will be no future letter carriers, which has economic impact well beyond one person's paycheck...I implore you to work diligently to repair the system before it is too late and your customer base leaves you for the myriad of alternative methods of sending and receiving mail.

Jamie Partridge, a 27-year letter carrier, answered panelists' questions about "vacant" routes. He testified that 25% of the delivery routes at his post office were without a regular letter carrier. Mr. Partridge acknowledged that these "vacant" routes may be broken up and parceled out to many different carriers each day, to be delivered sometimes early, sometimes late, by carriers who may or may not be familiar with the delivery needs of customers on that route; for example, the identity of occupants at specific addresses, vacancies, specific delivery sites for letters or parcels, sites for outgoing mail, and the existence of animals or other hazards.

Two panel members, Senator Chip Shields and MESD Director Geri Washington, mentioned during the hearing that they, too, live on "vacant" routes and experience the irregular delivery mentioned by Cara Bolles and Jamie Partridge in their testimony. Senator Shields said that letter carriers



Robert Keys 3-term "transitional employee"

"Will I be rehired at the end of my contract? Will I be transferred without notice to a station across town or a different city altogether? Will my hours decrease and I'll be unable to afford health insurance? Will my time on this route be too long and I am disciplined or let go? The life of the TE is one without a net."



Patty Olson window clerk

“...Long lines and shorter hours...Customers are unhappy and the employees are frustrated. Parkrose station has been so understaffed that at times they had to put a notice on their door “closed for lunch”. Many times clerks go without their breaks and have shorted lunch times and long hours...
“...2,000 station closures...according to the Postal Service plan... These closures can have significant impacts on local businesses...A public forum should be held in the impacted neighborhood for community input. In my opinion, the profile of a station and branch closure targets communities with high percentages of low-income residents...”

unfamiliar with the route will often deliver to the wrong receptacle on his porch. MESD Director Washington offered that she attempts to greet the new and different carriers who deliver her mail, but they are often so rushed they don't even say hello.

Paul Knauls, the 80-year-old unofficial mayor of NE Portland, testified about his family's reliance on the regular delivery of pharmaceuticals through the mail. He explained that his regular carrier, Jamie, knows to put the drugs on the back porch to prevent theft from the exposed front porch. Jamie also knows that the “Beware of Dog” sign is just to ward off burglars—that there is no dog. An unfamiliar, substitute carrier would likely leave a note, forcing the elderly Mr. Knauls to travel many blocks to retrieve his pharmaceuticals at the post office. Mr. Knauls' testimony emphasized the importance of regular, individualized delivery, especially for elderly or frail patrons.

Gloria McMurtry, a small business owner, testified about the importance of having a personal relationship with her letter carrier because of her special mailing needs.

William Beaulieu, a small business mailer, testified about relying on the postal service to deliver one-of-a-kind art work, which can't be replaced.

Sue Canfield, a 27-year letter carrier, testified:

I have watched the level of service diminish with no end in sight... The constant cycle of pivoting routes, that is breaking up a vacant route and giving many carriers a piece of the route, on a daily basis, takes a toll on the business customers. When a regular is not there, the substitute quite often is required to prepare other routes before preparing and delivering the business route. Late mail delivery to business patrons is noticed.

Often businesses are closed when the letter carrier arrives. Ms. Canfield told a story of one business customer considering shipping with the USPS, but who had questions about when she should have her parcels ready, not knowing when the letter carrier would arrive.

Substandard working conditions

The understaffing of Portland post offices has resulted in mandatory overtime, cancelled days off, and 10-to-12-hour workdays, including delivery after dark in the fall and winter for many letter carriers.

Isham Harris, a 34-year letter carrier, testified about the “perilousness of after-dark delivery: an unsafe physical environment—broken sidewalks, hanging tree branches, and crossing unlit streets. After-dark delivery presents an emotional trepidation such as will I, the carrier, be mistaken as a thief by the customer...”

Karen Staats, a 16 year letter carrier, testified about the physical and mental toll of working long hours. "...I continuously worked six days a week, up to 12 hours a day. It was very difficult to take any time off. Routinely even medical appointments were denied. Although I had a podiatrist appointment in August, it was so highly discouraged that I waited until my scheduled annual vacation in December to see the doctor. At that time it was determined that surgery was my only option. Physical therapy could have helped but excessive hours on my feet had eliminated that option...

"Since my surgery I have been pressured to work way before my foot was healed and subsequently reinjured it. Hurrying to accomplish my route, my ankle twisted and I tore three ligaments and fractured my ankle. It is painful every day and must be iced every evening to contain the swelling."

Ms. Staats showed the panel her unhealed and painful foot. She continued her testimony:

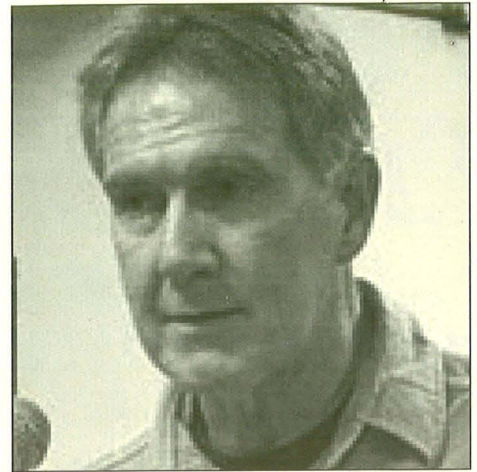
As the postal deficit continues to climb, so does the distance the mail carrier must travel. The number of deliveries is increased every six months and the time allotted to make the additional deliveries decreased. Because their mathematical equation does not factor in the theory of diminishing returns, increased parcel volume and increased route maintenance, the carrier is forced to work faster. In addition, routes are allowed to remain vacant, forcing carriers to work longer.

The combination of increased repetitive motions with increased duration is extracting a heavy toll on mail carriers' physical well being. The percentage of injuries has never been higher, yet the USPS continues to attempt to solve its financial crisis on the backs of the carriers.

Pressure to wring out five or 10 minutes from a carrier's time creates a contentious work environment. To be berated, doubted, criticized, and overworked on a daily basis harms the employee. When you harm a large percentage of the employees you surely harm the business.

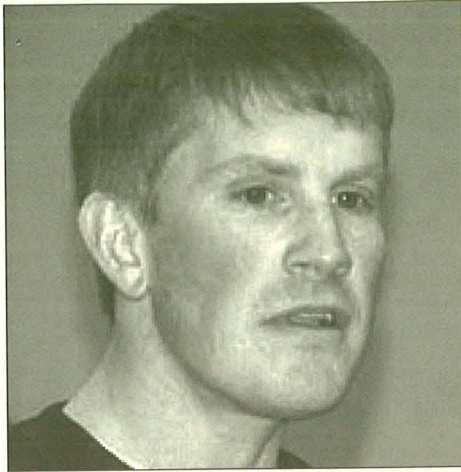
Kathy Lemm, the wife of five year letter carrier Steve Lemm, provided written testimony. "What does mandated overtime do to families? ... My husband leaves at 7 am and usually doesn't return home until close to 7 pm. Dinner together as a family is next to impossible... My husband is exhausted from all of the overtime and lack of days off to recuperate..."

Ken Wilson, a 26-year letter carrier, gave further testimony on the impact of late hours on family life. "I've been able to balance my job and my family responsibilities as a father, until the past couple of years. Working late most nights has kept me away from my family. Nights around the



Kevin Card
26 year letter carrier

"Most of those losses are due to a 2006 congressional mandate to fund the future retirement health care costs of postal employees, some of whom haven't even been hired yet, to the tune of over five billion dollars per year. No other government agency has to do this. No other private company is required to do this... If Congress or the President eliminates the mandate, we can keep your local post office open and continue to deliver six days a week..."



Willie Groshell 6 year letter carrier

"Our...network could be used to do much more than simply deliver and pick up the mail... We could offer the service of checking in on your loved ones... and sending you a quick message digitally, to either your e-mail or directly to your cell phone, each day letting you know how everything is. This would be a great way to enable elderly parents to stay at home safely even when their children do not live nearby..."

dinner table are scarce; helping my kids with their homework is almost non-existent... I want to be there for them, but the post office is keeping them away from me with the mandatory overtime and working my day off because they won't hire enough people to do the job right."

Transitional employees

Temporary, "transitional" employees (TEs) are on-call with no guaranteed hours, at the bottom of the postal pay scale, have no sick leave, no health insurance benefit, no pension, no seniority rights and no career ladder. TEs are hired for 360-day terms, terminated, then after five days and if management likes them, re-hired for another 360-day term. Some TEs have worked four terms (four years) already. Typically TEs work six days a week and are bounced from route to route and station to station.

Anil Nath, a fourth term Transitional Employee (TE), testified despite fear of retaliation from postal management.

A TE in the US Postal Service is about no hope, no benefits, no future. During three and a half years of service I have worked very hard, with long days, long hours in cold, rain, hot sun, and in snow and sleet. I have been bounced around like a ping pong ball from one station to another. I've worked in pain and suffering when I was hurt or injured.

The USPS tried to fire me just because I injured myself at work. Thank goodness that I do have one benefit: that I belong to the union of letter carriers. The union not only got my job back, they got it back in a matter of days. I hope that the USPS would appreciate the hard work of TEs and hire us on as career letter carriers so we can receive all the benefits we deserve.

Helene Wesley, wife of TE Fred Wesley, testified: "I am the wife of one of your hard working TE carriers. He has been working faithfully for the past three years. No time off. No benefits. Afraid to call in sick for fear of being terminated..."

Another fourth year TE submitted testimony anonymously, because she feared management retaliation:

Being a TE has been very time-consuming, stressful and exhausting... We work very hard six days a week, usually very long hours, leaving little time for our family. As a single parent, it's been a struggle for me. TEs are shuffled from station to station and route to route which is difficult even for a regular carrier. Customers complain about not receiving mail on time and not having a regular carrier... TEs need affordable health insurance and sick leave... A TE being forced to carry mail while sick is utterly ridiculous. I hope the postal service will make some changes...

Robert Keys, a third term TE, provided written testimony. "...[M]y position is filled with the stress of uncertainty. Will I be rehired at the end of my contract? Will I be transferred without notice to a station across town or a different city altogether? Will my hours decrease ...? Will my time on this route be too long and I am disciplined or let go? The life of the TE is one without a net...TE's are not hoping for the moon but just the chance for stability in a career we already proved we are capable and to fill the vacant routes we already carry."

Clerk shortages & post office closures

Patty Olson, a window clerk at the airport branch and director of legislation for the American Postal Workers Union, Portland local 128, testified about understaffing and post office closures. She said,

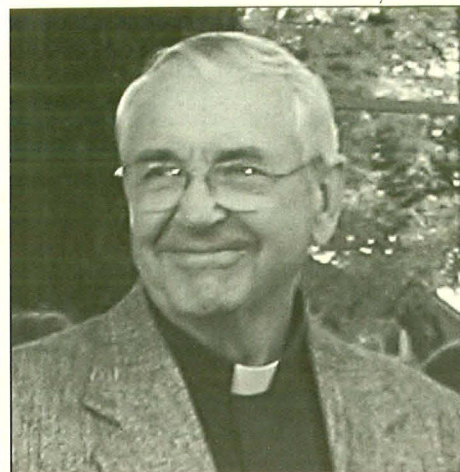
Parkrose station has been so understaffed that at times they had to put a notice on their door "closed for lunch." Many times clerks go without their breaks and have shortened lunch times and long hours. This can be said for many of the stations in the Portland area. Customers are so frustrated with the lack of service to mail items that they end up going to our competitors and paying more.

There will be over 2,000 station closures in the next few years according to the Postal Service plan...The branch and station post offices anchor many businesses. "Activity generators" they are called. Many customers expand their activities such as shopping and business within their same trip to the post office. This makes the business district a more attractive location for retailers and other businesses. The loss of a long-time station can create a significant void in the local business community...

She made the point that post offices within walking distance are more sustainable and then cited the importance of postal service for those at the bottom:

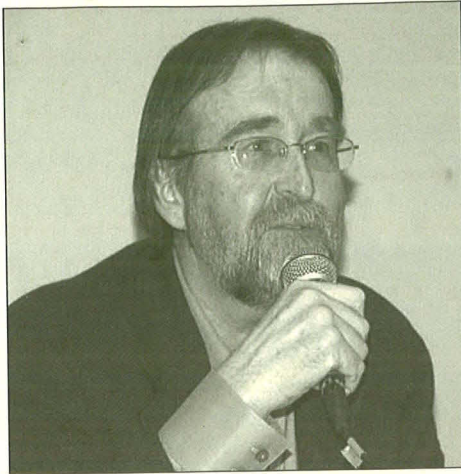
For lower income residents, the use of money orders to pay rent and utilities and other bills is an important postal service...Unlike those that have Internet access and a higher income where that business may be done online, these folks do not have that option for their mailing needs. Approximately 35% of households with incomes less than 20,000 and 30% of households over 65 do not have internet access. Those in retirement centers and assisted living rely on their neighborhood post office.

Recently, Cherry Blossom DCU was closed. Even though it did not have a window service, the customers were able to pick up their packages and mail. Now many are forced to drive to the Parkrose Station or Lents DCU much farther away. The communities in



Father Robert Krueger
Catholic priest

"... the service of the common good by the postal service has already suffered erosion in recent years...a movement away from a social benefit model to a corporate model that values computer generated numbers over people...In my opinion this movement needs to be resisted by the American people."



Bill Bigelow Rethinking Schools

"...What I heard was disturbing... It also made me feel as a teacher that we're all part of the same thing (increased work load)... We experience what's going on in our society individually but it's actually a collective phenomenon."

these areas were notified of the change about a week before it was implemented.

She ended by recommending more communication around post office closures:

It would be wise for the Postal Service to consider impacts of a station closure on the community. These closures can have significant impacts on local businesses, which should be taken into consideration. A public forum should be held in the impacted neighborhood for community input. In my opinion, the profile of a station and branch closure targets communities with high percentages of low-income residents...

Fixing the national accounting problem

Kevin Card, a 26-year letter carrier and secretary-treasurer of the NALC 82, explained that while the local career hiring freeze, the threat of eliminating Saturday or other days of delivery and the closure of 2,000 to 17,000 community post offices were all predicated on the so-called "deficit" in postal finances, there is no actual revenue short-fall. There is an accounting problem.

...Last year the US Postal Service reportedly lost over eight billion dollars. Most of those losses are due to a 2006 congressional mandate to fund the future retirement health care costs of postal employees, some of whom haven't even been hired yet, to the tune of over five billion dollars per year. No other government agency has to do this. No other private company is required to do this...

The 40 billion ratepayer dollars (that is from postage, not taxes) already dedicated to future retiree health care costs can cover all current retiree health care needs for the next 20 years. The Postal Service's own watchdog, their Office of Inspector General, has reported that postal ratepayers have over-funded other postal employee retirement accounts by over 50 billion dollars.

An accounting problem, not a deficit.

"If Congress or the President eliminates the mandate, we can keep your local post office open and continue to deliver six days a week."

Card put this situation in the broader political context:

Let me add one thing. Union members across the country are under assault and being blamed for budget deficits. The US Postal Service is using the exact same tactic in trying to claim that the current "postal deficits" are due to high labor costs. Every postal union is now or soon will be in contract negotiations, listening to postal management claim that there is a "deficit" due to overpaid postal workers with luxury benefits. Don't believe the hype!

Positive ideas for change

Willie Groshell, a six-year letter carrier and co-chair of the NALC 82 organizing committee, testified about the need, over the long run, for the US Postal Service to adapt its business model as first class mail volume declines in the age of the internet. He called for Congress to allow the postal service to expand its products and services.

...Our service goes to every home and every address in the entire USA. This is called our last-mile delivery network, nothing else in this country even comes close to comparing to this massive network of service... We have a local government building in nearly every community... We have the largest fleet of vehicles in the entire country... We have the work and the dedicated workforce to use all of these things to provide the best service possible.

...[W]hy not make our fleet...electric and alternate fuel...these vehicles could be equipped with sensors that measure air quality on a local level, local weather changes and even be able to detect possible biological threats...

Our post offices could be put to much greater uses... We already do passports and money orders so why not have licenses, park passes, and other government forms and information at every post office in the country. A one-stop government service center... We have one of the largest computer networks in the country. Why not provide access to the tools of the internet and the modern digital age to those that do not have the means on their own. Have internet kiosks in every city and access to digital currency for those that are unbanked and under-banked or simply people on the road far away from wherever their banking might be...

Our last-mile network could be used to do much more than simply deliver and pick up the mail... why don't we provide shipping for beer and wine from one person to another? We already have the tools to do this, by requiring that any alcohol be shipped by restricted delivery you would ensure that whomever is receiving the shipment would sign for the shipment and show their ID thereby providing positive proof of age... We could offer the service of checking in on your loved ones when you are away from home and sending you a quick message digitally, to either your e-mail or directly to your cell phone, each day letting you know how everything is. This would be a great way to enable elderly parents to stay at home safely even when their children do not live nearby... The US postal service could easily take over the census duties, after all we already go to each home in the USA, and thereby save the government hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars. Make vote-by-mail nationwide...



Geri Washington
Director, MESD

"There were some great ideas, hopes and dreams expressed at the end. Where's management, to hear these dedicated, committed individuals?..."



Chip Shields State Senator

“How can management with a straight face call someone “transitional” when they’ve been transitioning for three years?...I learned so much tonight and I want you to know that we’re with you.”

Our scanners could be used for so much more than they are right now... we could do same-day delivery of essential items like prescription drugs. The local pharmacy could receive an order for medication, fill the order and then electronically notify the post office that so and so over on Main St. has a prescription ready for pickup and delivery that day, which in turn would be sent to a letter carrier. We are already going to go by both the pharmacy and home after all, and could simply pick up the prescription and then drop it off with the rest of the mail that same day... Our scanners could be used to take payment for postage and in turn print out the postage at the same time. So much is possible...

Postal service and the common good

Several community leaders testified about the importance of preserving a strong postal service for the common good.

Jon Stubenvoll, representing the Oregon Food Bank, testified to the enormous benefit the annual Letter Carriers’ Food Drive provides to hungry Oregonians. He spoke of the importance of retaining Saturday delivery to accomplish this important community service.

Josh Goldberg, representing Secretary of State Kate Brown, read her written testimony: “Last year, the postal service proposed to cut Saturday service in an effort to save money. I adamantly opposed these cuts and traveled to Washington, DC to testify against them in front of the United States Postal Regulatory Commission. Any changes to the accessibility of mail service would negatively affect Oregonians’ ability to vote, by hampering both timely receipt and return of ballots. These changes would be harsh particularly for those living in rural communities...”

Father Robert Krueger, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, testified:

Most of us probably have not fully appreciated the extent of the public benefit offered by the postal service... how regular,



Paul Knauls 80-year-old customer

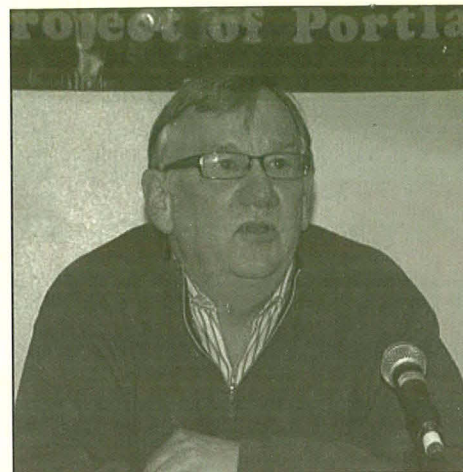
“Saturday delivery is very important. If a check is supposed to come on Saturday and there’s a holiday on Monday then its Tuesday before it comes, but by then the bill’s already been taken out. And we need the regular delivery people who know where to put those packages, especially the pharmaceuticals for the elderly.”

universal delivery of letters and packages benefits all of us, especially low income people, the elderly, and people and businesses in rural and remote locations.

... Its presence resists the erosion of common public benefit that has occurred in our country in a period of excessive individualism, deregulation, privatization and shortsighted decisions for adapting to technological change.

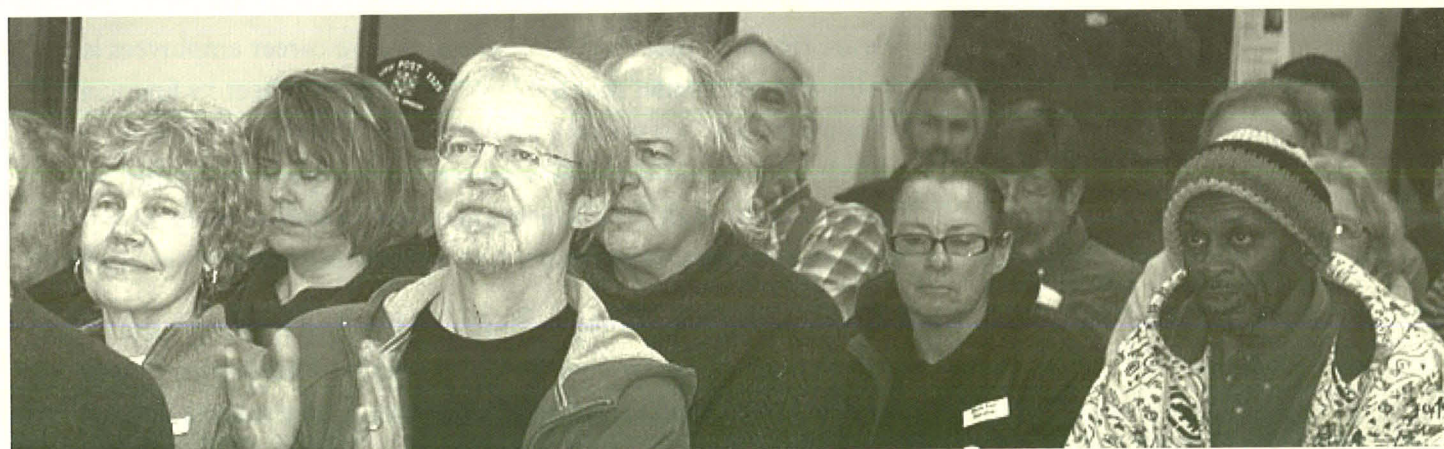
However, the service of the common good by the postal service has already suffered erosion in recent years because of administrative decisions [which have] ...also degraded the working conditions of postal workers...a movement away from a social benefit model to a corporate model that values computer generated numbers over people... In my opinion this movement needs to be resisted by the American people.

After the close of testimony and questions to those offering testimony, the Workers' Rights Board panel recessed to deliberate. They returned to respond as individuals to the testimony and to issue the following recommendations.



Don Oman
Casa Bruno

"As a business person I find it pretty appalling the way the postal service operates. It's an incredible waste of human potential. You have a loyal workforce... that wants to make the business better. It's a dream for an employer. I can't believe they're missing this opportunity."





Recommendations on the Crisis Facing the US Postal Service

The Workers' Rights Board will request a meeting with US Postal Service management from the local, regional, and national level in order to communicate the following:

- We have heard compelling testimony from Portland, Oregon-area postal customers, mailers, letter carriers and clerks about the deterioration in service provided by the USPS, including late, irregular and after dark delivery of mail, and longer lines and waits at the retail windows.
- We have concluded that this deterioration in service is due to the understaffing of career letter carriers and clerks as a result of a three year career hiring freeze in the Portland area and a substitution of temporary "transitional" employees (TEs) for career hires, including leaving up to 25% of delivery routes without a regular letter carrier, in some post offices, and breaking up and parceling out these "vacant" routes.
- We recommend that USPS management restore customer service and improve working conditions by
 - fully staffing Portland-area postal facilities through the hiring of career letter carriers and clerks—especially from the ranks of existing "transitional employees," returning veterans and the unemployed—and other measures designed to improve service, and
 - allowing timely and thorough public participation in decisions about the closure of community post offices.
- The WRB will write letters to the US Congressional delegation from the Portland, Oregon area and to the President of the United States, in order to communicate the following:
 - We are troubled that the USPS refusal to hire career employees is predicated on a belief that the USPS is unable to meet its financial obligations due to revenue losses and must therefore cut labor costs; and we understand that USPS management expects to further cut labor costs through the elimination of one or two delivery days per week and the closure of from 2,000 to 17,000 community post offices.
 - We have heard compelling testimony, including studies by the Office of the Inspector General of the USPS, which indicate that, despite revenue losses, the USPS could be operating "in the black" except

for over-payments to the CSRS and FERS retirement funds and an unnecessary pre-funding of retiree health benefits, mandated by the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006.

- We recommend that the President issue an executive order to the Office of Personnel Management to fix this accounting problem.
- We recommend that, absent presidential action, our U.S. Congressional delegation co-sponsor legislation to fix this USPS accounting problem without disruption to service, working conditions, or collective bargaining.
- We recommend that our U.S. Congressional delegation hold local town hall meetings on the current crisis and the future of the USPS in order to solicit public ideas about changes that will be necessary to postal service in the age of the internet, and co-sponsor legislation to expand the products and services that USPS can offer the public.
- The WRB will distribute our report and recommendations to the local media, local elected officials and the community to help educate the public about the crisis facing the postal service and to encourage public support for the U.S. Postal Service and community dialogue with postal management, the postal unions and Congress about local and national solutions to the crisis.
- The WRB encourages local community organizations, neighborhood associations and government bodies to pass resolutions supporting these and other recommendations to restore customer service and working conditions, and to improve the U.S. Postal Service.



Portland Workers' Rights Board Members

Alcena Boozer, *St Philip the Deacon*
Andrea Cano, *United Church of Christ*
Anita Rodgers, *MRG*
Ann Turner, *Virginia Garcia clinic*
Anne Sweet, *SE Works*
Armando Gonzales, *MECHA*
Avel Gordly, *former state senator*
Barbara Byrd, *LERC*
Barbara Dudley, *Working Families Party*
Bill Gates, *Parkrose United Methodist Church*
Bill Bigelow, *Rethinking Schools*
Brian Hoop, *City of Portland*
Cassandra Garrison, *anti-Poverty advocate*
Cecil Prescod, *UCC minister*
Chip Shields, *State senator*
Chris Frost, *Swanson, Thomas, Coon*
Chris Wold, *Lewis & Clark Law School*
Chuck Currie, *Parkrose United Church of Christ*
David Dornack, *Rose City Park Presbyterian Church*
David Leslie, *EMO Exec Director*
David Wheeler, *First Baptist Church*
Denny Scott, *Brotherhood of Carpenters*
Diane Rosenbaum, *state rep, dist. 14*
Dick Springer, *former state senator*
Don Oman, *Casa Bruno*
Donald Buxman, *Christ the King Catholic Church*
Elliott Young, *Lewis & Clark, Latin American Studies Dept*
Fr. Chuck Lienert, *St Andrews Catholic Church*
Francisco Lopez, *CAUSA Oregon*
Gene Ross, *UCC*
Geri Washington, *Mul. Co. ESD*
Hector Lopez, *UCC retired*
Jack Mosbrucker, *St Therese Retired*
Jill Ginsberg, *family physician*
Johanna Brenner, *PSU, Womens Studies*
John Schwiebert, *Metanoia Peace Community*
Joice Taylor, *N/NE Business Alliance*
Jose Padin, *PSU, Sociology Dept.*
Joseph Tam, *community leader*

Joseph Wolf, *Havurah Shalom, rabbi*
Julie Hastings, *PCC*
Kathleen Sullivan, *former NARAL director*
Lorenzo Poe, *Coalition of Black Men*
Lynne Smouse Lopez, *Ainsworth UCC, minister*
Margaret Carter, *State Senator*
Maribeth Healey, *Sen Merkley*
Marilyn Sewell, *First Unitarian Church*
Mark Knutson, *Augustana Lutheran Church*
Marla McGarry-Lawrence, *St Matthew's Episcopal Church*
Martin Gonzalez, *Portland School Board*
Martin Hart-Landsberg, *Lewis & Clark Economics Dept.*
Mary King, *PSU, Economics Dept.*
Michael Arken, *Association of Retired Americans*
Michael Dembrow, *state representative*
Nancy Weed, *Or. Hunger Relief Task Force*
Nellie Fox-Edwards, *AARP*
Pat Ross, *1st Cong. United Ch of Christ*
Raleigh Lewis, *Coalition of Black Men, Aff. Act.*
Randy Tucker, *Metro*
Randy Leonard, *City Council*
Robert Krueger, *St. Francis*
Ron Williams, *Oregon Action*
Sam Adams, *Mayor of Portland*
Serena Cruz, *former County Comm.*
Steve Novick, *activist*
Steven Goldberg, *Nat. Lawyers Guild*
Susan Leo, *Bridgeport United Church of Christ*
Teresa Huntsinger, *Oregon Environmental Council*
Terry Moe, *Redeemer Lutheran Church*
Tina Kotek, *State Representative*
Valerie Chapman, *St Francis Pastoral Admin.*
Verna Porter, *Col. River District Council of Retirees, ILWU*
Veronica DuJon, *PSU, Sociology Dept.*

Organizations listed for identification purposes only

Appendix

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2010

Mr. Sylvester Black
Area Vice President
United States Postal Service
1745 Stout Street
Denver, CO 80299

Dear Mr. Black,

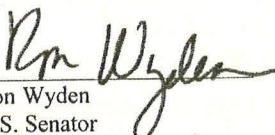
As long time supporters of the United States Postal Service and its employees, we are writing today to bring your attention to some safety concerns at a Portland post office.


We know that the USPS' goal of timely delivery and efficient service to its customers must be balanced by concern for the safety of its employees. A number of employees have contacted our offices with concerns about letter carriers being on their routes after dark this winter, a situation that is addressed in the Portland area's local Memorandum of Understanding. Our understanding is that letter carriers were being required to deliver after dark and on their days off because of a staffing shortage. It is also our understanding that the Portland Postmaster does not have the necessary authority to hire for new positions, and that the Portland district will soon be adding new routes, which is likely to intensify the current staffing situation.


Additionally, as you are likely aware, unemployment in Oregon has been consistently above the national average, and at the last report was 11 percent. We write today to ask you to fully and fairly consider adding additional letter carriers to the Portland District.

We hope that you can work cooperatively with your employees to come up with a solution to this problem, and would be happy to assist you in any way that would be appropriate.

Sincerely,


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

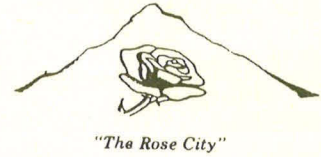

Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator


Earl Blumenauer
U.S. Representative



National Association of Letter Carriers - Branch 82

5265 N.E. 42nd Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97218
(503) 493-5903



July 22, 2010

Kim Anderson
USPS Portland District Manager
PO Box 3609
Portland, Oregon 97208-3609

Dear Mr. Anderson:

As President of NALC Branch 82, I've met with you emphasizing the need for the USPS to hire new city letter carriers to provide adequate staffing levels for Portland Area postal facilities. This is an open letter, and again I'm urging you to immediately hire new career city letter carriers in order to improve customer service and employee well being.

The Postal Service's lack of concern for customer service and the welfare of employees is evident with its current policies. Insufficient staffing means as many as 8 or more routes pivoted per station daily, resulting in poor customer service and chronic mandatory overtime. Carriers not on the regular overtime desired list are repeatedly denied their scheduled days off and mandated to work. Carriers have been instructed by postal management to cancel medical appointments they have scheduled on their days off. Carriers requesting incidental annual leave outlined in our LMOUs are consistently denied because of "lack of staffing."

Beginning late October through early February, the shorter daylight hours provide challenges to avoid delivery after dark, even with adequate staffing. Since the hiring freeze began several years ago, the USPS has repeatedly violated the various Portland area LMOUs contractual provision and repeatedly required carriers to deliver mail several hours after darkness. This is inefficient and unsafe. The USPS must immediately begin hiring new career letter carriers to prevent repeating the ongoing contractual violations and expensive monetary grievance settlements.

When the USPS hiring freeze ends, we advocate that current and past Transitional Employees be given an opportunity for career hiring. Some Transitional Employees have worked several years with few benefits, hoping to become career postal employees. They are trained and eager. Also, there are unemployed Portland area military veterans. Historically, the USPS encourages veterans to become employees. The NALC Branch 82 urges the USPS to continue this tradition of a preferential hiring process for veterans.

Page 2
Kim Anderson
July 22, 2010

Enclosed is a copy of a letter sent to USPS Area Vice President Sylvester Black dated March 5, 2010 from U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, and U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer about the problem last fall and winter with understaffing and mail delivery after dark. The letter reads in part, "*We write today to ask you to fully and fairly consider adding additional letter carriers to the Portland District.*"

Also enclosed are selected letter carrier comments from the NALC's Voice of the Carrier Survey conducted several months ago. Some relate to the issue of understaffing and the hardships of ongoing mandatory overtime.

We recognize and appreciate that there's been some progress to address the staffing shortage through eREASSIGN transfers. But with attrition and other factors that reduce complement, more hiring must be done as soon as possible to reach an adequate staffing level.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to these urgent issues.

Respectfully,


James M. Cook, President
NALC Branch 82

cc: Sylvester Black, USPS Area Vice President
U.S. Senator Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley
U.S. Representative David Wu
U. S. Representative Earl Blumenauer
U. S. Representative Kurt Schrader
Paul Price, NALC National Business Agent
Lois Strobel, Editor, NALC Branch 82 B-Mike
File

DISTRICT MANAGER



February 8, 2011

Portland Area Workers' Rights Board
c/o Jobs With Justice
6025 E. Burnside St.
Portland OR 97215-1267

Dear Portland Area Workers' Rights Board Members:

Thank you for your letters inviting me and Portland Postmaster Shawneen Betha to appear at a hearing you have entitled "The Crisis Facing the U.S. Postal Service." While we will be unable to attend your meeting on February 21st, I do want to comment on several issues mentioned in your letter.

First of all, the United States Postal Service is indeed facing a crisis nationally. As I am sure you are aware, the Postal Service receives no tax dollars for its operations and relies on the sales of postage for its operating revenue. Over the past three years, mail volume has declined about 20 percent nationwide, a number consistent with mail volume trends in Oregon during that time.

Several factors have contributed to the Postal Service's current financial condition, including a law requiring the USPS prepay future retiree health benefits – something not required of any other agency, public or private. Last year's deficit reached \$8.5 billion, of which \$5.5 billion is attributed to this fund payment.

Our financial crisis has forced the Postal Service to become more efficient over the past several years – something I'm proud to say we have achieved while continuing to improve the level of service we provide our customers. In fact, the current score measuring Portland District employees' on-time delivery of First-Class Overnight Mail is at one of the highest levels ever: 97 percent of First-Class Mail is delivered on time every day, as measured by an independent firm.

Yes, the Postal Service is currently hiring very few employees in Oregon – as is the case around the nation – but we have not been in a three-year freeze as your letter suggested. We are reducing our workforce through attrition, new efficiencies and realigning our workforce based on operational needs – not through layoffs. With the economic challenges all businesses are facing, the USPS is very proud to have not laid off any employees nationally or locally as many other businesses have unfortunately been forced to do. While making these adjustments, our employees' well-being is of paramount concern. I am proud of the outstanding work environment we offer to our employees throughout the state – including several workplaces that have been recognized for their excellent safety records.

I am also proud of the people who work for the USPS Portland District and their strong commitment to service, even as we face necessary changes brought about by Americans' changing mailing habits and accelerated by the recent difficult economy.

We offer many programs, including 24-hour access to our Employee Assistance Program, that benefit our employees with confidential help for any issues they may be facing at work or elsewhere. Also, if employees feel as though they are experiencing problems at work involving safety, harassment, poor treatment or other issues, we encourage them to contact the appropriate supervisor – or someone above that position, if necessary. Our people are our most important asset, and it is my commitment to ensure their experience at work is safe and positive.

Thank you again for your interest in the U.S. Postal Service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kim Anderson

PO Box 3609
PORTLAND, OR 97208-3609



IDEAS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

The following ideas respond to U.S. Postal Service forecasts for a future of declining mail volume and shrinking customer service through the year 2020. The list is excerpted from testimony delivered on April 15, 2010 by Postal Regulatory Chairman Ruth Y. Goldway before a Joint House Hearing on the Future of the Postal Service.

- I. Develop mail products based on value to the customer not necessarily on volume. This is the fundamental tenet needed to fix the Postal Service's broken business model.
- II. Convert the bulk of its vehicle fleet to run on electricity reducing annual fuel and maintenance expenses by more than \$400 million per year and increasing America's independence from foreign oil.
- III. Have a range of products that are fully trackable and traceable and comparable with those of private package companies.
- IV. Provide a one-stop shop for government services. Not just passports but national park passes, regional EZ passes, identity cards, etc.
- V. Participate as a full partner in the nation's 2020 census, thereby saving the country hundreds of millions.
- VI. Building on the money order services now offered, introduce and implement a system to provide assistance to the unbanked, replacing usurious "pay day" operations with reliable fair service.
- VII. Commit to having a network of post offices in key locations that are open more hours than in 2010 and even on Sundays and guarantee at least one 24-7 post office in every big city.
- VIII. Implement a comprehensive Vote-by-Mail system that suits the needs of all the states in the union for federal, state and local elections held at any and all times of the year.
- IX. Reinvent the letter carrier: Empower him/her to measure real-time service: to be accessible to the community by email; to be the eyes and ears of the community; and to be the sales and service point for small businesses.
- X. Reorganize the workforce - not to make them part time employees - but to enhance their skills thereby adding flexibility in the processing centers, new energy conservation technology to logistics and motivated outgoing sales people at retail counters.
- XI. Commit to having ten other ideas in place and operating within the decade.

"Just as limiting access and declines in service create a self-fulfilling prophecy, improvements which may seem small can create the incremental reinvigoration that begets real growth,"

Chairman Goldway

About the Portland Area Workers' Rights Board

The Workers' Rights Board is a public forum for workers to bring complaints against employers for violating their human and legal rights in the workplace. The Board is drawn from a broad spectrum of community leaders and can intervene with employers and the public to help resolve situations that threaten workers' rights. Safe, living-wage jobs where workers are not discriminated against for speaking up for their rights are the backbone of any healthy community.

The Portland Area Workers' Rights Board will attempt to resolve issues in a variety of ways, including: investigating complaints, meeting with workers and their employers, holding public hearings or press conferences, and participating in community events to raise awareness about workers' rights, including the right to organize. Issues that the Board might address include:

- Patterns of arbitrary and unfair treatment by supervisors
- Support for workers exercising their right to organize
- Illegal firing of workers during an organizing drive
- Creation of a living wage policy for publicly-funded jobs
- Health and safety concerns
- Rights and treatment of workfare participants
- Working conditions in low wage industries
- Immigrant workers' concerns

About Portland Jobs with Justice

The Portland Area Workers' Rights Board is a project of Portland Jobs with Justice. Portland Jobs with Justice is a coalition of over 90 labor organizations and community groups dedicated to protecting the rights of working people and supporting community campaigns to build a just society for everyone. We work to:

- Protect workers' rights in the workplace and in the community
- Support the right to organize here and throughout the world
- Demand corporate responsibility and accountability
- Create an economy that works for working people

To support these campaigns and to build rank-and-file and grassroots power, we use a wide range of tactics from letter writing to educational forums and from rallies to peaceful direct action. We give priority to struggles involving the most vulnerable workers in our community, including low wage workers, people of color, immigrants, women, and young workers. We are building a network of relationships to support workers' struggles throughout our community.

For information about Portland Jobs with Justice or the Workers' Rights Board, go to www.jwjpgdx.org or contact us at 503-236-5573.

023
4
Matasar, Emily

From: JamieP7206@aol.com

Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2011 5:41 PM

To: Matasar, Emily

Subject: request for communication slot at June 29 City Council meeting

request for 3 min. communication slot at June 29 City Council meeting

Jamie Partridge
5831 NE 10th Ave
Portland, OR 97211
503-752-5112

Topic: How the crisis within the US Postal Service impacts Portland neighborhoods, both postal customers and workers.

6/10/2011

Request of Jamie Partridge to address Council regarding how the crisis within the U.S. Postal Service impacts Portland (Communication)

JUN 29 2011

PLACED ON FILE

Filed JUN 24 2011

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		