

Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

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COULD USPS PRIVATIZE AS EARLY AS 2020 ?

(the following excerpt from a Dec. 27, 2019 article in Fortune.com, a business news service, includes alarming predictions about the future of the US Postal Service. The "Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service" and "US Mail Not for Sale" are sponsoring a petition to the Postal Board of Governors to appoint a Postmaster General who is fully committed to public ownership of the Postal Service. Sign the petition at <https://usmailnotforsale.org/>)

"...the Postal Service as a public, government-run entity is not guaranteed, and advocates in Congress, President Donald Trump's administration, and consulting firms like McKinsey & Co. have called for privatization of the agency for some time.

Those changes could come as early as next month.

The United States Postal Service [must] ...find a new Postmaster General by January 2020.

The new leadership will be handpicked and approved by the Postal Service's Board of Governors: a group of five men (mostly with investment banking and private banking experience), three of whom were appointed by Trump, along with the current Postmaster General and her deputy.

Once the new leadership is in place, the board will also be tasked by the Trump administration with creating a package of large, structural changes intended to help the ailing Postal Service. Those changes will likely include privatizing and selling pieces of the public service off, according to the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), which represents more than 200,000 current and retired postal employees.

In 2018, Trump issued an executive order to create a postal task force... The group ... recommended that the agency roll back collective bargaining rights for postal workers and sell off pieces of the service to private industry.

"The USPS's current business model has become outdated due to changes in technology, markets, and customer needs and preferences," the report stated. "It is unsustainable and must be fundamentally changed if the USPS is to avoid a financial collapse and a taxpayer-funded bailout."

...Around the same time in 2018, the White House Office of Management and Budget also proposed privatizing parts of the USPS and ending package delivery...

"The OMB report suggests that the U.S. Postal Service should be sold off to private interests and perhaps shouldn't even be allowed to ship packages. Most Americans oppose the OMB's recommendations," said APWU president Mark Dimondstein, in a statement. "We need to send a clear message to the next Postmaster General that the U.S. Mail is not for sale."

...The changes come as FedEx, Amazon, and UPS eat up a larger portion of delivery in the U.S. But these companies tend to focus their services more on urban and suburban areas and not rural parts of the country that don't provide a large profit margin. A study by the Institute for Policy Studies found that 70 million more Americans would have to pay hefty surcharges for deliveries without the USPS.

The impact could also raise prices of the goods being shipped.

"Businesses, from the online retail shops to manufacturers shipping parts to customers in need, could face sharply higher shipping costs, leading to higher prices for their customers or lower profits for their businesses," the Institute for Policy Studies report found. "Small businesses would be hit especially hard, since they don't have the clout to negotiate the same level of shipping discounts as big corporations."...



Residents of North Portland's 97217 zip code (and allies) protest the USPS "Consolidated Casing" test in their neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS RALLY AGAINST CONSOLIDATED CASING

(Nov. 30, 2019 article from media outlet KOIN) — Residents in the Kenton neighborhood held a rally against the test program being run by the United States Postal Service.

The program, called "Consolidated Casing," is supposed to speed up mail carriers and eliminate routes. However, neighbors complained that mail has been arriving late or at the wrong location. It's also left mail carriers scrambling.

"There's just a lot more work than there would normally be," said Willie Groshell of the Oregon State Association of Letter Carriers. "We're trying to do our best, and we want the people that live here in Kenton to understand what's happening, so that they can be kind and loving to all the people doing the work here, and have an actual direction to voice their concerns."

When asked for a response, a representative from USPS said while they could not speak to the protest itself, USPS has "Consolidated Casing at just one Post Office in the State of Oregon. It's an internal test process we are investigating that has no external customer impact."

The program is being tested in 65 postal codes across the country.

COLLIERVILLE VS CLUSTER BOXES

(excerpted from Memphis Commercial Appeal, 12/10/19)

The Town of Collierville is advocating for continued mail service to individual mailboxes at new single-family homes despite the United States Postal Service's push for cluster mailboxes. The Collierville Board of Mayor and Aldermen on Monday unanimously passed a resolution in support of single-family home delivery.

In December 2017, the Postal Service published a mailbox guide for new developments. The guide emphasizes "centralized delivery" — including cluster mailboxes — as the preferred method of delivery due to its efficiency.

As part of its resolution, Collierville is seeking an exemption to the Postal Service's cluster mailbox policy... The West Tennessee Home Builders Association is working alongside the town as seeks exemption to the policy...

Town Administrator James Wellen said the resolution will be forwarded to U.S. Rep. David Kustoff... Kustoff signed on to the Easy Access to Mail Act, a bill sponsored by Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., that prohibits the Postal Service from being able to retroactively require homebuilders to place cluster mailboxes at new housing developments...

HOW THE POSTAL SERVICE PRETENDS TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

by David Yao, VP of Seattle Area APWU (article originally from Greater Seattle APWU News)

Did you know that our employer received a “Climate Leadership Award” in 2017, and brags about its sustainability efforts on the USPS website? But like a lot of things our employer says in public, the truth on the ground paints a different picture.

ALTERNATIVE FUEL VEHICLES – THE MASQUERADE

The Postal Service has a fleet of over 220,000 vehicles, which burn a lot of fuel, and produce a lot of the greenhouse gases which cause climate change. Rather than admit that they haven't actually reduced their fuel emissions, they brag about having 46,000 “alternative fuel” or “alternative fuel-capable” vehicles.

A closer look reveals that over 40,000 of these vehicles CAN run on Ethanol (E85)/gasoline blend – but they don't. Almost all of them run on gasoline. Their excuse is lack of nearby suppliers. And while using gasoline/ethanol mixtures does somewhat reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a much better alternative would be electric vehicles, with clean renewable energy as the power source.

INCREASING PETROLEUM USE

The Postal Service brags about increasing their use of alternative fuels by 119% from 2005 to 2013. Which sounds impressive, except that the total of all “alternative” fuels used in 2013 was the equivalent of 2 million gallons of gasoline, while the postal fleet used 154 million gallons of petroleum, and the postal contract fleet used 560 million gallons.

Despite all their fancy papers, postal fleet petroleum use increased from 144 million gallons (equivalent) in 2005 to 172 million in 2015, and then to 186 million gallons in 2018. They set a goal of decreasing petroleum use by 20% by 2015 over 2005 use, but instead saw a 19% increase. Yes, we often see USPS “goals” set and then failed to be achieved, but this one has real world consequences.

ELECTRIC DELIVERY VEHICLES – WAVE OF THE FUTURE?

The delivery industry was rocked by news that Amazon, which has purchased a stake in electric-vehicle startup Rivian, has ordered 100,000 delivery electric vehicles to be put on the streets by 2030. By comparison Fedex only has a total of 85,000 vehicles.

How many electric vehicles does the USPS own? Have you ever seen one? In 2013 they had only 43.

Electric vehicles have two huge advantages, one being cost, and the other being that they don't burn fuel that contributes to global warming – at least not directly. It depends on what is used to generate the electricity. If it is made by burning coal, that doesn't really help. If generated by clean energy, such as solar, wind, tidal, or water power, then it helps a huge amount.

In Washington state we have the advantage of having access to cheap hydropower. Seattle City Light electricity, for example is 88% hydroelectric, 5% nuclear, 4% wind, and 1% each from coal, natural gas, and biogas.

The Postal Service is now having to make a major purchasing decision for carrier vehicles, as the Long Life Vehicles in use are at or past the point of replacement. It plans to award a six billion dollar contract for 186,000 vehicles sometime in 2020. There are a number of proposals, including at least one electric vehicle proposal. The decision it makes could position it as a climate change pioneer, or as a dinosaur.

THE ECONOMICS OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES

If you have ever shopped for a car and looked at electric vehicles,

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you know that they currently cost thousands more than a gasoline-powered model. But did you also know that the fuel costs are so much lower, that you probably will spend less in the long run? As the owner of a Chevy Volt (a plug-in hybrid with a back-up gas engine) I have followed the industry. Manufacturers are making great strides in improving battery life, driving range, and bringing costs down for electric vehicles.

So here is the dilemma – the Postal Service is strapped for cash, so it might be cheaper in the short run to buy gas-powered vehicles, but then much cheaper in the long run to purchase electric vehicles, because of the lower fuel cost. Here is where the financial bind caused by Congress' 2006 mandate to prefund retiree health care premiums continues to hamper postal modernization of its equipment. Maybe we can get some environmental allies to support our efforts to get pre-funding undone, based on this argument.

Did you know that fighting climate change is a good argument for retaining the postal mailbox monopoly and for using the Postal Service? It's better to have one delivery vehicle in your neighborhood (postal, of course) rather than having numerous competitors burning fuel and making deliveries. But Amazon is about to undermine that, with their electric vehicles. And you can bet that they will brag about their delivery service being the “green choice.”

EMPLOYEE COMMUTE TIME – HOW CAN WE REDUCE IT?

The Postal Service states that employee commuting is one of their major sources of emissions, and “we've reduced emissions by implementing a telecommuting policy and encouraging virtual meetings whenever possible.” Which causes anyone who hears this to laugh. Yes, lots of clerks, custodians, mechanics, PVS drivers, and mail carriers would love to telecommute, but, seriously...

There is a way to reduce employee commute times, however. Some postal employees have long commutes and drive many miles. Why not make it easier for employees to transfer closer to home? I'm not talking about changing seniority rules within an installation, but why not make the transfer process easier from one installation to another, if it would reduce commute times? End the lock-in periods, and take away management's ability to kill transfers based on attendance and discipline records.

CLIMATE CHANGE – IT MUST BE ADDRESSED

All of us can make contributions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially in Washington state. Buying an electric car, and converting your heating and cooling to a heat pump are two such ways which will cost more upfront, but save money in the long run.

It may be more difficult to get our employer to address this seriously, rather than hiding behind deceptive statistics. But publicizing the real facts is the way to push this conversation. If, for example, as part of the “Green New Deal”, we could get Congress to assist in the additional financing needed to convert the postal fleet to a model of clean transportation, it would be a win for the environment, a win for public service, and if done right, a win for postal workers.

**ASK YOUR CONGRESS PERSONS TO
Support HR 2382 and S 2965 to remove the pre-funding mandate for retiree health benefits,
H.Res. 33 against postal privatization, H.Res. 23
protecting door delivery, H.Res 54 to preserve 6-day delivery, and H.Res 60 to restore service**