

# Communities and Postal Workers United (CPWU)

Feb—Mar, 2014 -- *No Closures! No Cuts! No Delay of the Mail!* - [www.cpwunited.com](http://www.cpwunited.com)

## Postal Service Delays New Wave of Mail Processing Closures

(excerpt from article by [Eric Katz](#) (GovExec.com) Jan. 24)

“The U.S. Postal Service has postponed its scheduled second round of mail processing center closures, the agency announced Friday, marking a temporary victory for postal employee unions.

Phase two of USPS’ “network rationalization” plan was scheduled to kick in Feb. 7 and would have ended overnight delivery for mail sent and received in the same area. This would have resulted in a major consolidation of processing facilities.

The first phase of the plan was scheduled to close about 140 processing centers and the second phase would have closed an additional 90, according to agency estimates. The Postal Service maintained 487 processing centers nationwide before the consolidations began in 2012. A USPS spokeswoman declined to comment on the reason for the postponement, but said the agency plans to reschedule phase two at some point in the future....”

**Brothers and Sisters—our resistance efforts are bearing fruit!** (see back page for photo of Springfield, OR plant closure action). As APWU President Mark Dimondstein stated on the Ed Schultz Show, when asked if he thought such civil disobedience in defense of postal facilities would continue: “I both hope so and think so.” Two, three, many Springfields!

## Protesters Called for No More Letter Carrier Deaths

(excerpt from article by [Alexandra Bradbury](#), Jan. 22, in *Labor Notes*)

A Martin Luther King, Jr. Day march in Washington, D.C. brought together postal workers and family members of 26-year-old letter carrier Tyson Jerome Barnette, who was shot and killed while delivering mail in the dark in Landover, Maryland, in November.

Protesters blamed the Postal Service, saying his tragic death reflects safety problems brought on by understaffing and plant closures.

USPS hasn’t released figures on how many deliveries take place in the dark—but it does track how many carriers finish their routes after 5 p.m. In a recent report, this figure hit 43 percent—the highest yet, nearly half of all carriers—for the latest month reported, September 2013. Compare that to five years earlier, when fewer than 20 percent of letter carriers got back so late.

“Twenty years ago, the only time you would ever work in the dark would probably be in late December, if something went wrong,” said Joe Piette, a recently-retired Philadelphia letter carrier who’s still a postal activist. “Maybe if a lot of carriers were out sick, you might be persuaded to do overtime on another route... Today it’s much more common.”

Many letter carriers attending the march wore headlamps or



*Jan. 20 MLK Day action to End Dark Delivery, organized by CPWU (Washington DC) (photo: Joe Piette)*

carried flashlights they’d bought at their own expense to cope with the nighttime work.

Seven members of Barnette’s family made the 425-mile trip from South Carolina to take part in the rally. Bridget Barnette explained she didn’t want what happened to her son to happen to another letter carrier.

Nearly half the mail processing plants in the country have closed down over the past two years. Now mail is trucked hundreds of miles out of its way to be sorted, and the remaining plants are overwhelmed with the deluge—creating a cascade of delays. That means many letter carriers, who once started their routes at 6 a.m., now can’t get started until 9 or 10. Even with an eight-hour shift, they finish after sundown.

To make matters worse, many shifts are far longer—10, 12, even 15 hours.

That’s partly because many routes have too many mailboxes to realistically deliver in eight hours. There are more delivery points and fewer routes than there were a decade ago.

“They’ve overburdened a lot of routes,” Piette said. “There’s no down time. Your day is planned down to the second. If the weather’s bad, or it gets dark—there’s a lot of things that can make your day longer.”

It’s also partly because a hiring freeze has left many routes vacant. Traditionally, most career letter carriers delivered their own regular routes five days a week, explained retired carrier Dave Welsh. The sixth day would be covered by a carrier technician, who got to know the five routes they rotated through every week.

But today, USPS covers the vacant routes piecemeal, in “just in time” fashion. Some carriers are asked to complete their own route, then walk half of another. Many “city carrier assistants” like Barnette—the low-paid, perma-temp tier of carriers—are routinely floated from one unfamiliar route to the next....

After rallying at the King memorial, attendees marched to postal headquarters, where they delivered their demands and laid a flowery wreath in memory of postal workers injured, wounded, or killed on the job.

**NEW YORK METRO AREA POSTAL UNION CALLS FOR AN IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON THE SALE OF THE HISTORIC BRONX GPO AND FOR AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION: Did racism dictate the Postal Service's planned sale of this post office?**

Jan. 14 (excerpted from press release by NY Metro APWU)

When President Jonathan Smith of the New York Metro Area Postal Union learned that the United States Postal Service was going ahead with its plans to sell the historic Bronx GPO, he wanted to know what was the rationale for selling Bronx GPO, while, at the same time, deciding not to sell the Old Chelsea Station post office in Manhattan. Each post office was built in the 1930s in the center of their communities and has remained a vital part of the life of its community for decades. The Bronx GPO is equally or even more important to the people of the Bronx than Old Chelsea Station is to the people of Manhattan's Chelsea community.

After studying the issue, President Smith has called for a moratorium on the sale of Bronx GPO and for an independent investigation to determine if the economic and racial makeup of the community was the determining factor in the go ahead to sell Bronx GPO.

In Chelsea, all the elected officials signed a letter to the Postal Service calling for Old Chelsea Station not to be sold. In the Bronx, all the elected officials signed a letter to the Postal Service calling for Bronx GPO not to be sold.

In both Chelsea and the Bronx, community residents, cultural institutions and businesses argued for the retention of their post office.

Bronx GPO is an historic landmark that contains original artwork that is a treasure for the community. Old Chelsea Station, too, is an historic landmark that contains original artwork that is a treasure for the community.

Did the Postal Service treat each community equally? In Chelsea, the Postal Service made its presentation of its plans to sell the post office at a highly publicized town hall meeting held on a weekday evening at a venue that was large enough to ac-

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Join thousands of union members, officers, and grassroots labor activists who are on the front lines in our workplaces, our unions, and our communities. Meet troublemakers from around the country and around the world.

More than 100 meetings and workshops include contract campaigns, creative organizing tactics, beating apathy, running for local union office, assertive grievance handling, bargaining over technology, understanding the economy, and reviving the strike.

Communities and Postal Workers United will be hosting two postal workers meet-ups and a workshop on Saving the People's Postal Service.

***Tell Congress: Continue door-to-door and six-day mail delivery. Oppose cuts, closures, and attacks on workers rights. Repeal the pre-fund mandate. Re-fund the pension surplus. Oppose HR 2748 (Issa). Co-sponsor S316 (Sanders) and HR 630 (DeFazio) – the Postal Service Protection Act of 2013.***



*Seven "postal protectors" were arrested protesting the pending closure of the Springfield, Oregon mail processing facility on December 16, the busiest postal day of the year, in an action organized by CPWU. Coming from all over the state, the seven included active and retired postal workers, veterans, seniors, a minister, and small business person. (photo Bette Lee)*

**Staples Protests Take Off!**

(excerpted from APWU Web News Article, Jan. 28)



More than 150 APWU members and supporters took part in a lively protest outside a Staples store in San Francisco on Jan. 28, challenging a deal between

the company and the U.S. Postal Service that staffs "postal" counters in Staples stores with non-postal employees. The deal threatens good-paying union jobs and jeopardizes public post offices, they said.

The union is demanding that postal employees be assigned to perform the postal work at Staples stores. If Staples and the USPS refuse, the APWU will ask customers to take their business elsewhere. Keep up with the campaign at [apwu.org](http://apwu.org). Petition at [stopstaples.com](http://stopstaples.com)

commodate many people where community residents could easily make their sentiments known. In the Bronx, the Postal Service barely notified anyone of its intent to hold a meeting on the fate of Bronx GPO. A meeting was held on a weekday morning, making it virtually impossible for working people to attend to express their feelings about their post office being sold. Did the Postal Service, from the beginning, treat the people of the Bronx differently than the people of the Chelsea community?

Bronx GPO, the facility being sold, serves a community that is mostly Latino and African-American. The community served by the Chelsea Post Office, where the Postal Service decided to retain the post office, is overwhelmingly white.

This isn't the first time that the Postal Service has had its sight on providing less service to the people of the Bronx. A few years ago, the Postal Service released a list of 34 post offices in New York City it planned to close: 17 of them were in the Bronx. In 2011, the Postal Service eliminated mail processing in the Bronx, delaying mail delivery throughout the entire borough of 1.4 million people....

**Keep up on the latest fightback!**

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**MAIL BEING DELAYED? POSTAL WORK BEING "SUBCONTRACTED"? TELL US ABOUT IT**

Over 150 mail processing facilities were "consolidated" this past year. We're seeking documentation about delay of the mail and subcontracting of postal work, especially trucking, mail handling and mail processing. Contact us, [cpwunited1@gmail.com](mailto:cpwunited1@gmail.com)