

Monetary Incentive Negotiated For Retirement, Separation

APWU-represented employees who retire or separate on or before Nov. 30, 2009, will receive a monetary incentive of \$15,000, in accordance with an agreement negotiated by the union. The incentive will be paid in two installments to eligible employees.

"This agreement achieves a long-standing objective of the APWU," said union President William Burrus.

The incentive will be offered to eligible full-time employees who terminate their service through regular retirement, Voluntary Early Retirement, or voluntary separation. (Eligible PTR and PTF employees will receive proportional percentages of the incentive.)

To qualify for early retirement, employees must have at least 20 years of service and be 50 years of age or must have 25 years of service at any age. (The annuity is reduced 2 percent for each year workers are under 55.)

Eligible employees who do not qualify for regular or early retirement but wish to receive the incentive may resign.

Not covered by the agreement are employees who were issued a notice of discharge on or before Aug. 24; MPE 9s, ET 10s, and ET 11s who cannot be replaced without training; Operating Services employees; employees in the Accounting Services section of the IT/ASC bargaining unit, and Transitional Employees.

Eligible full-time employees may, at their option, end their service on or before Sept. 30, or they will be assigned a date of Oct. 31 or Nov. 30 by management, based on operational needs. Employees will be paid \$10,000 within two pay periods after separation, and will receive an additional \$5,000 on Oct. 29, 2010. Part-time employees will be assigned a date of Nov. 30.

Negotiations over the agreement, which was finalized

Aug. 24, took two months, Burrus said. "Our goal was an incentive of 50 percent of a year's salary. Because of the difficult economic times, however, the agreement had to be structured to avoid adding to the deficit. Nonetheless, we feel that the settlement will provide a modest incentive to employees to end their service.

"The USPS financial condition is precarious," Burrus said. "The congressionally-imposed obligation to pre-fund retirees' health insurance benefits has caused tremendous deficits over the last two years, and without legislative relief, improvement is not in the forecast.

"Management has been forced to reduce costs, but unfortunately, the cuts have been applied disproportionately to bargaining-unit employees, especially to those in mail processing," the union president said.

"Because our contract prohibits layoffs, the only means for cutting work hours have been to reassign full-time employees and to reduce the hours of PTFs," Burrus noted. "Excessing and work-hour cuts cause severe hardships for our members," he said, "so finding a way to make voluntary complement adjustments became an urgent matter."

There will be a moratorium on excessing from Aug. 24 through Oct. 9 to allow time to assess the vacancies created by the retirements and separations. During this period, excessing notices that have already been issued will be reviewed.

If more than 25,000 employees indicate they wish to accept the offer, the parties will discuss implementation, based on a proportion of the number of employees in the complement of the APWU and Mail Handler crafts. Mail Handlers are expected to receive an offer virtually identical to the APWU-negotiated agreement. *For more information, visit www.apwu.org.*

APWU Members Urged to Press Fight Against S. 1507

With the Senate expected to vote soon on S. 1507, a bill that would be devastating to postal workers, APWU President William Burrus is urging union members to continue to contact their senators. "It is vitally important that we oppose this legislation," he said.

The Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Funding Reform Act was intended to provide temporary financial relief to the USPS. However, the bill was amended to

require arbitrators ruling on postal collective bargaining agreements to "take the financial health of the USPS into account."

Although the financial health of the USPS has always been a consideration during arbitration, "the amendment would elevate this factor above all others," Burrus said. "It would undermine our efforts at the bargaining table." *For more information, visit www.apwu.org.*