

Mail carriers in eastern Tennessee issue open letter describing their working conditions

Eastern Tennessee postal workers
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The World Socialist Web Site is posting the following open letter from a group of United States Postal Workers in eastern Tennessee. We urge our readers to send in your own statements of support and descriptions of conditions at your own post office. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

Dear Brothers and sisters:

We are a group of rural mail carriers in Seymour, Tennessee, located less than half an hour outside of Knoxville, a major air freight hub. Jobs we once took great pride in have become intolerable due to the restructuring plan being forced on us by Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, local management, and corrupt union officials.

Over the last three years, conditions at our post office have worsened and are now so toxic that every one of the letter carriers dreads coming into work. Appeals to our management and grievances filed with the union to address conditions have been ignored. Therefore, we are writing this letter to inform workers everywhere of what is happening at the post office and to appeal for their support.

Our facility is almost entirely devoted to delivering packages for Amazon. The package volume has more than doubled since Covid, almost tripling on certain days.

We are working double shifts, making two trips a day in 90 degree weather (32 degrees Celsius) with no air conditioning in our mail trucks. We get back hours later than we should. But although that extra trip shows up on our pay stubs, the money isn't in our checks.

The Rural Route Evaluated Compensation System (RRECS) system evaluates our routes upwards of 63 hours. But we only get paid for 48 hours. On average, we are giving the post office 24 hours and more of our time for free every month. To add insult to injury, our

time off over the weekends are being taken away.

There is a constant battle trying to get our pay correct. Letter mail that has to be manually sorted entitles us to additional pay over 125 pieces. But even though we enter this amount on our timecards, management "forgets" to pay us.

Management isn't even honoring the disabled veteran leave and are changing our sick leave in the system to annual days (paid time off).

Nor have they made good on buying back time served in the military, for those of us who are veterans, to count towards our retirement. The HR Department claims it loses the paperwork, and it's nearly impossible to reach HR to sort out the issue.

The worsening conditions are taking a physical and emotional toll on us. Several carriers have had to undergo carpal tunnel surgery and over half of us are going to chiropractors for relief from muscular skeletal pain due to the increased workload and stress. Alarmingly, several workers have even expressed suicidal ideation, a sign of extreme job-related stress.

We have filed grievances via the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) local about these abuses. But if they even respond it is to tell us there is nothing they can do, and that we should go talk to the postmaster. The postmaster then shrugs and tells us they don't know how to fix it and that we should file a grievance!

A group of us got together to write to the Congressional representative of our district, Diana Harshbarger. But her office only told us to take our issues up with our union, the dysfunctional bureaucracy that caused us to reach out to her in the first place!

Clearly, the USPS and the political parties are indifferent at best. That is why we are writing to the entire working class to organize your own offices

independently and link up with us for support.

We are calling for post offices to write your own public letters to report on conditions where you work. Then, get in touch with us and let's begin a network of rank-and-file committees to fight the privatization of the US postal service!



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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