

Rural letter carriers in the US speak out after latest mail count continues massive wage cuts

Our reporters**17 October 2023**

The article posted last week on the *World Socialist Web Site* on the results of the latest route evaluations at the US Postal Service has evoked a wide response from rural letter carriers. The evaluations, which ended last week, confirmed massive cuts in pay for the vast majority of rural carriers, many of whom lost over \$10,000 in annual wages earlier this year under the new Rural Route Evaluation Compensation System (RRECS).

The cuts to wages for rural carriers are part of a vast restructuring program, misnamed "Delivering for America," whose aim is to eliminate tens of thousands of jobs and prepare the post office for its eventual privatization. In opposition to this program, which has the support of both major parties and the bureaucrats in the postal unions, postal workers around the country have formed the USPS Postal Workers Rank-and-File Committee. In its founding statement, the Committee declared: "We must prepare action from below to assert the will of 635,000 career and non-career USPS workers to make sure our needs and interests take absolute priority, and not the slash-and-burn policies of corporate-controlled politicians."

We are publishing a selection of responses from postal workers to last week's article below. If you work at USPS and have a story to tell, contact the WSWS by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

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From Central Florida: I scanned way more than I scanned in the first 6 month [evaluation] period and I lost an hour. I had lost 5 hours in the first 6 months (it was a 45k route). I disputed my mileage as it was wrong, and received an hour back for the first 6 months ... The issue with this system is that I [became a regular carrier] in 2017 and received all my step increases. When I lost the 5 hours, that took all of my 7 year raises and I have to start over again. That should not be even legal. This system is completely a fraudulent system to steal our money!

From South Florida: I went from a 44k [route] to 43h, and to now a 41j. My pay was cut twice and I'm losing \$4,500 a year. It's not right or fair that a faulty system determines our pay. The USPS doesn't care about their workers, only about saving money. Only the carriers get pay cuts, but upper management doesn't. The carriers are the ones getting the job done to get the mail delivered every day. But the first thing the new Postmaster General [Louis DeJoy] does is attack the carriers that make the USPS run. The RRECS system is flawed, you can't see any data for why you drop 2 hours or 5 hours. Something should be done because us mail carriers are so important to the American people and we shouldn't be treated this way.

From Arkansas: I've been working for the USPS, first from 2007 to 2015 as a RCA, and now as a Regular. All the COLAs, pay raises, and steps earned have disappeared, it's like I've been demoted. Managers, Supervisors, CEOs, the Postmaster General or anyone that's working in the offices, their pay stayed the same, with bonuses. It has cut the legs out right from under us, as well as our arms.

I'm currently looking for a second job (unbelievable!). It's just gotten real, I've eliminated or downsized some of my expenses to stay afloat. And it's not looking good. I'd taken out a few loans and am living off my overdraft. No, I'm not middle class anymore. Just working for the US Postal Service. Jeez.

From Northern California: RRECS is complete BS. I'm in the mountains, and the tree coverage makes the digital mapping impossible. I lost 6 hours in the first count and gained an hour this previous count. After 13 years of working for the USPS, I'm planning on resigning next year. I feel like we are slave labor at this point. Our current postmaster is a complete moron that only knows information about city routes and nothing about the rural side. The information that we are granted on the mini

counts, I fear are deliberately confusing, to make it impossible to tell what we're getting credit for or not. It's all a big game and I'm sick of playing it. It's really unfortunate because I loved this job and loved my customers and I'm actually a really great carrier. So sad.

From Georgia: Yes, I lost \$10,000 in pay due to new pay evaluations. I was not given the chance to do my own "mapping" the way they are paying us, or even the chance to look to see if it is accurate.

From New Hampshire: I have carried mail as a rural carrier for [nearly three decades], and I have always been able to make the rates under the old evaluation system. Since the new system came online 6 months ago, I have not been able to make the rate, I now work an hour or longer each day for no pay. The first cut took \$7,500 off my salary and also makes me work every other Saturday. In technical postal terms, I went from a 45K [route] to a 42K.

As a dues paying union member I contacted the union to get the paperwork justifying my pay cuts and their response was that the information wasn't available to them or to me. My representative followed that up by suggesting that if I was eligible to retire, to get out because the USPS is swirling down the drain!

The post office was a desirable job decades ago; now we can't hire new workers. In a time where we see UPS and FedEx getting big pay raises to stay up with the tough economic times, the USPS has found a way to do the opposite. As a long time employee it's hard to watch the single biggest civil service job run into the ground. Another sad day for the USA.

From Houston, Texas: This is exactly what happened to me and my route in the last two evaluations. I go to work 6 days a week and get paid for less than 7 hours per day last time. The second time I gained 2 hrs a week. I lost more than \$15,000 a year and I even have to work one extra day a week.

I totally agree that we have been sold out by our union. There is no way we can dispute against the management. I disputed the first but nothing came back. I have completely no hope that I can change anything by disputing this time. The "formulas" the management created and agreed by the union are such crap! If you or someone are able to look at those formulas, please do so.

From Mississippi: I have been with the USPS as a rural carrier for nearly 25 years. For [more than half of that] I waited, working part time to finally become a full time regular. I left [another] career for the USPS. I thought that as far as work hours and pay, it was the better option for

me and my family. This was once a great job.

I have recently lost \$8,000 a year and am now expected to work 6 days a week instead of the 5 days that I have worked for the last 10 years. I feel like, as the oldest, senior carrier in my office, who is also compensated based on [the higher tier] table 1 (table 2 began in 2013 if I am not mistaken and they are paid at a lower rate), I am no longer a desirable employee to them. Why pay me at a higher rate when they could get rid of me and replace me with a carrier that will be compensated at a significantly lower rate?

The RRECS system is a disaster. There is no transparency, the GPS often isn't accurate and getting a straight answer about certain aspects seems impossible. I'm struggling just to get certain reports printed by management so that I can dispute this latest evaluation.

I have seriously considered returning to [my former profession]. The stress that RRECS and management creates is really not worth it. After nearly a quarter of a century being a loyal employee of USPS, the thanks I get is a cut in salary and my Saturdays taken away from me and my family.

But you will notice upper management, including DeJoy, maintain their salaries when the carriers are the backbone of USPS, not somebody somewhere behind a desk that knows nothing of the job I actually do every day. And our union...they should be ashamed of themselves. According to [National Rural Letter Carriers Association President Don] Maston, we are just overpaid and lazy and should just suck it up.

Sure mail volume has decreased. But the package volume has skyrocketed! He should enjoy his role in the union while he still has it. He will very likely lose his position come election time. I pay dues every single pay period to be represented, not insulted. Morale is at an all time low. But for some reason, carriers keep showing up and delivering mail.

I am aware that it is "against the law" for us to strike. But it worked in 1970 [when postal workers carried out a nationwide wildcat strike], it'd likely work again. They can't possibly fire all of us. I could continue on and on. But I'll leave it there. Thank you for taking interest in how we are being treated. It's unbelievable really.



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