

US Postal Service city letter carriers reject contract in large turnout

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Build the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee to defend the post office! To join, fill out the form at the bottom of this article.

City letter carriers have rejected a sellout contract proposal by 63,680 votes to 26,304. Balloting ended January 27, and results were announced January 31.

Turnout was much higher than in previous votes, and more carriers voted “no” than turned out in total for the 2019-23 contract vote. The 89,984 ballots represent a 42 percent increase in turnout.

The turnout was a sign of massive opposition to the deal. Workers were particularly outraged over the 1.3 percent annual “raises,” which amounts to pay cuts after inflation, and substandard cost-of-living adjustments. The contract would have continued the a decades-long decline in living standards for postal workers, maintains a reserve of temporary workers and renews the demeaning surveillance system, formerly known as TIAREAP.

Worst of all, the contract would have facilitated the massive cuts and consolidation at USPS under the misnamed “Delivering for America” program, which will shed tens of thousands of jobs, close more than 1,000 local post offices and automated those sorting and delivery centers which remained open. The quality of service has declined sharply under the program, while the cost of sending mail has greatly increased.

While it was already well underway by the time Biden left office, it is set to kick into high gear under the Trump administration, which is attempting to establish a dictatorship and direct rule by the corporate oligarchy. In December then President-elect Donald Trump reiterated his intentions to privatize the postal service. He empowered Elon Musk through his phony Department of Government Efficiency to significantly downsize the 2.2 million federal workforce, more than 25 percent of whom are postal workers.

Musk was granted access last week to federal

employees’ salaries and has made a legally dubious offer to pay eight months’ severance to any workers who quit in short order. Musk was given a mandate from Trump to slash trillions from the budget, which will directly target postal workers—the largest segment of federal employees—and vital programs their families depend on, including education, Medicare/Medicaid and other social programs.

Postal workers are justifiably celebrating this important act of defiance. Thousands of comments have been posted on social media, such as this one from a city carrier on Reddit: “The fact that SEVENTY ONE percent of voters voted to reject this is absolutely nuts. It’s clear that all of us, despite how tired and jaded we are, were completely insulted by what was [offered].”

Another commented on how unusual the turnout and result were: “For those who are relatively new to the post office, or somewhat unaware of union stuff, it is exceedingly rare for the membership to reject a TA. ... This is the kind of thing that we are capable of when we unify with each other, communicate with each other, and hold the company to the expectations that we have earned with our literal blood, sweat, and tears.”

Now more than ever, it is urgent that workers take the initiative by building an alternative leadership to the bureaucracy which controls the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), in order to mount a fight against the Trump administration. This means the building of the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee, founded in late 2023 to oppose Delivering for America.

Any illusion that NALC and USPS have or can be pressured into going back behind closed doors and negotiating a better deal is fatal. This has been proven time and again in other struggles, such as at Boeing last year, UPS and the auto industry in 2023 and on the railroads in 2022. In each case, the bureaucracy responded to rank-and-file anger by intensifying their efforts to pass

sellouts. At UPS and the auto industry, contracts passed under false pretenses have cost tens of thousands of workers their jobs.

For decades, labor law has violated the First Amendment free speech rights of federal workers by imposing a blanket ban on all strikes. This creates a pseudo-legal framework where USPS administrators and corporate politicians are able to dictate terms to postal workers, with the help of the union bureaucrats who use these laws to keep a grip over the rank and file. NALC and the other unions openly support Delivering for America, even lying to workers about its aims.

The next step in the “bargaining” process is the resumption of talks this week. The parties have 15 days for renegotiation, and, if they agree on a new offer, it will be put up to a vote by the members; otherwise, the future of the contract moves to binding interest arbitration. Arbitration robs postal workers of even the right to vote on the contract since it is imposed by fiat by a “neutral” arbitrator.

In other words, USPS and NALC have two more chances to push through a sellout with only cosmetic changes. As far as they are concerned, the contract has already been decided and postal workers will have to accept it one way or the other.

Before the vote results were officially announced, an apparent leak from USPS Deputy Postmaster General Douglas Tulino suggested they already had assurances from the NALC bureaucracy that concessions to “right size” and “alter work rules” will not be challenged during arbitration. NALC President Brian Renfroe has denied the authenticity of this letter. But whether the memo is authentic or not, arbitration is the final step in the “legal” conspiracy to defeat workers’ collective will.

The first principle of a viable strategy against this is for postal workers to reject this procedure, which blatantly infringes on their rights, as totally illegitimate. While workers are told that they have no choice but to accept what the law allows, the Trump administration is on a rampage against the Constitution, violating the law whenever he sees fit and seeking to build the foundation of a fascist regime in America.

Postal workers must defend the right of every American to timely and inexpensive mail deliveries. As one worker put it: “USPS is a service and not a business that needs to turn a profit. How many times do we have to explain that it is simply unprofitable to deliver to every address in the USA?” That, however, is precisely what is animating the corporate attacks on USPS.

Workers never won anything without a fight. In 1970, US postal workers launched a massive wildcat strike against some of the earliest attempts to move towards privatization under the Nixon administration.

Today, postal workers have powerful allies among workers and youth across the US and the world. They must link up with the rapidly spreading protests against Trump’s attacks on the rights of immigrants as part of the broader defense of the democratic rights of the whole working class. They must also establish lines of contact with the millions of other federal employees who are facing a jobs bloodbath under Trump/Musk.

Postal workers must reject Trump’s attempts to split the working class with his “America First” rhetoric, and link up with postal workers in other countries. The same pro-corporate attacks on the mail are taking place all over the world, including in Germany, Britain and in Canada, where over 50,000 workers struck last year against a privatization scheme until the walkout was banned by the government.

In those countries, workers have also built rank-and-file committees in order to fight against both management and union sellouts. They collaborate with the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

As one retired city carrier told the WSWs, “[Renfroe] plans to drag this out just like he did the TA that took over 600 days. They’re buying time, all the while going ahead with DFA privatization plans. Carriers need to join rank-and-file committees now and get what they deserve—fair pay and adequate working conditions.” Join the USPS Workers RFC today by filling out the form below.



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