

APWU CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

**American
Postal
Workers
Union,
AFL-CIO**

WILLIAM BURRUS
PRESIDENT

Before The

FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
POSTAL SERVICE,
AND DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SUBCOMMITTEE

TESTIMONY OF SAM ANDERSON

PRESIDENT

CHICAGO AREA LOCAL

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My name is Sam Anderson, and I am the President of the Chicago Local of the American Postal Workers Union. I represent clerks, motor vehicle workers, and maintenance employees. Congressman Davis, I want to thank you and your committee for holding this hearing and inviting me to testify.

The postal employees who I am privileged to represent are committed to providing first-class service to the citizens of the Chicago metro area. They are deeply upset that they have been unable to provide prompt and efficient service, and are eager to be a part of a solution. We are proud of our city, and we should be equally proud of the service performed by postal employees.

A solution to the deteriorated mail service begins with staffing. There are too few employees to handle the volume of mail originating from and going to the Chicago business community and the city's individual citizens. Despite our best efforts and the deployment of technological improvements, the mail volume overwhelms our ability to serve the community.

Postal management has taken a page from the private sector and has incorporated personnel strategies designed to minimize costs at the expense of service. The USPS philosophy is that if consumers in the private sector tolerate waiting in long lines or serving themselves, postal customers should do the same, and retail staffing should be adjusted proportionally. But the United States Postal Service is not a commercial establishment, and my union encourages individual citizens to let their voices be heard when postal services do not meet their expectations.

There is nothing unique about the Chicago mail stream that justifies the deterioration of service that has occurred over recent years. We can do better. We should do better. And, with your oversight, we will do better.

Before I conclude, I want to address a companion issue that has been raised before your committee, the subcontracting of postal activities. At a previous hearing, APWU President William Burrus expressed the official union position that congress should refrain from interfering in subjects of collective bargaining. My union joins with those who oppose the use of low-wage, low-skilled, non-career employees to perform the tasks of serving the nation through the mail system. We are afforded a government monopoly with the trust that it entails. In this day of physical threats to the security of our citizens, it is essential that only career postal employees have access to the homes of every American.

But this is a fight within the boundaries of collective bargaining, and should not be subject to congressional interference. Our contract includes extensive rules and procedures governing the contracting of postal work. This protection is not as strong as we want it to be, but our shortcomings in collective bargaining are no justification for congressional interference. We ask that you restrict your involvement in internal postal decision-making to those issues pertaining to public policy, and we ask that you leave collective bargaining to the labor unions and postal management.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of your committee for giving the citizens of Chicago the opportunity to engage in the discussions for improving mail service. Chicago is the greatest city in the greatest country, and it deserves first-class mail service. My union pledges to work with you in achieving this righteous goal.