

Benjamin Franklin Award

The Benjamin Franklin Award, the highest award given by the Postal Service, dates back to 1960, when Postmaster General Summerfield approved a Benjamin Franklin Award for presentation to members of special advisory groups, members of Congress, or employees making a contribution not connected with official employment or beyond that recognized in the existing awards program.

On December 15, 1960, Summerfield presented the Benjamin Franklin Award, in the form of a certificate, to the 12 members of the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee: William H. Buckley, Arnold J. Copeland, Ervine Metzl, Franklin R. Bruns Jr., Bernard Davis, Sol Glass, Harry Lindquist, Abbott Washburn, Robert Sivard, C. Robert Payne, Roberts E. Fellers, and Donald R. McLeod. Summerfield also presented the award to his liaison to the committee, L. Rohe Walter, the Special Assistant to the Postmaster General, Public Information.

In 1962, Summerfield's successor, Postmaster General J. Edward Day, approved the Benjamin Franklin Award for appointed (non-career) postal officials who demonstrated outstanding and unusual leadership. The major purpose of the award was to honor officials who could not be considered for the Department's regular awards, which were limited to career postal employees. On November 2, 1962, in Headquarters Circular 62-42, Day announced the establishment of the Benjamin Franklin Award and outlined the following criteria:

- a. *Recipient will have served at least two years in a responsible position in the Department.*
- b. *His accomplishments will have had a unique impact on major programs of the Post Office Department.*
- c. *His accomplishments will have had one or both of the following effects, to an unusual degree: significant improvement of service to the public or general overall improvement of operations.*
- d. *His accomplishments are within the personal knowledge of the Postmaster General.*

The Postmaster General designates persons to be honored by this award; nominations are not made to him.

Frederick C. Belen, Assistant Postmaster General, Operations, received the first Benjamin Franklin Award under the new guidelines on February 25, 1963. The award was described as "a walnut plaque, appropriately routed to hold a Parian Ware bust of Benjamin Franklin, an original 1847 issue of a five-cent Benjamin Franklin stamp, and an engraved metal plate."¹ Parian ware is a hard white porcelain resembling marble.

In 1965, the two-year employment requirement was waived when the award was issued to Ira Kapenstein, and on July 8, 1969, revised instructions eliminated this requirement. Since 1971, the non-career requirement has no longer been applicable, as all postal officials appointed since Reorganization have been career employees. A list of award recipients follows.



Postmaster General Albert V. Casey received the Benjamin Franklin Award shortly before he resigned in August 1986. He was the first Postmaster General to receive the award while still in office. Postmasters General Anthony Frank (1992), Marvin Runyon (1998), and John Potter (2010) also received the award near the end of their terms.

Benjamin Franklin Award Recipients

| Name and Title | Postmaster General | Date |
|---|--------------------|------------|
| Franklin R. Bruns, Jr. Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| William H. Buckley Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Arnold J. Copeland Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Bernard Davis Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Robert E. Fellers Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Sol Glass Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Harry Lindquist Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Donald R. McLeod Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Ervine Metzl Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| C. Robert Payne Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Robert Sivard Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| Abbott Washburn Member, Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee | Summerfield | 12/31/1960 |
| L. Rohe Walter Special Assistant to the Postmaster General | Summerfield | 12/15/1960 |
| Frederick C. Belen Assistant Postmaster General, Operations | Day | 2/25/1963 |
| James F. Kelleher Special Assistant to the Postmaster General for Public Information | Day | 8/8/1963 |
| Ralph W. Nicholson Assistant Postmaster General, Finance and Administration | Gronouski | 9/17/1964 |
| Ira Kapenstein Special Assistant to the Postmaster General for Public Information | Gronouski | 8/27/1965 |
| Richard J. Murphy Assistant Postmaster General, Personnel | O'Brien | 11/4/1966 |
| William M. McMillan Assistant Postmaster General, Operations | O'Brien | 11/3/1967 |
| Timothy J. May General Counsel | Watson | 1/17/1969 |
| Frederick E. Batrus Assistant Postmaster General, Transportation | Watson | 1/17/1969 |
| David A. Nelson General Counsel | Blount | 7/24/1969 |
| Paul N. Carlin Executive Assistant to the Postmaster General | Blount | 9/25/1970 |
| E. T. Klassen Deputy Postmaster General | Blount | 11/12/1970 |
| Frank Nunlist Assistant Postmaster General, Operations | Blount | 6/4/1971 |
| James W. Hargrove Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Finance | Klassen | 3/1/1972 |

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| Edward Dorsey Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Operations | Bolger | 6/2/1979 |
| James V. P. Conway Deputy Postmaster General | Bolger | 7/11/1980 |
| Myron A. Wright Chairman, Board of Governors | Bolger | 2/6/1981 |
| Emmett E. Cooper, Jr. Regional Postmaster General, Southern Region | Bolger | 1/26/1983 |
| Carl C. Ulsaker Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Special Projects | Bolger | 2/4/1983 |
| C. Neil Benson Deputy Postmaster General | Bolger | 5/30/1983 |
| Robert L. Hardesty Chairman, Board of Governors | Bolger | 9/10/1984 |
| Warren M. Bloomberg MSC Manager/Postmaster, Baltimore, Maryland | Bolger | 10/11/1984 |
| William F. Bolger Postmaster General | Carlin | 1/4/1985 |
| Joseph F. Morris Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Employee and Labor Relations | Carlin | 3/1/1985 |
| Francis X. Biglin Senior Assistant Postmaster General, Administration | Carlin | 5/22/1985 |
| Albert V. Casey Postmaster General | Strange (Deputy Postmaster General) | 8/7/1986 |
| Jackie A. Strange Deputy Postmaster General | Tisch | 12/8/1986 |
| Louis A. Cox General Counsel | Frank | 3/6/1990 |
| William Ford Chairman, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives | Frank | 1/31/1991 |
| Anthony M. Frank Postmaster General | Coughlin (Deputy Postmaster General) | 2/27/1992 |
| Marvin Runyon Postmaster General | Board of Governors | 5/4/1998 |
| Michael S. Coughlin Deputy Postmaster General | Henderson | 5/18/1999 |
| Clarence E. Lewis, Jr. Chief Operating Officer | Henderson | 3/20/2000 |
| Richard Porras Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President | Henderson | 3/20/2000 |
| James F. Van Loozen Manager, Public Policy Communications | Henderson | 10/13/2000 |
| Richard J. Strasser, Jr. Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President | Potter | 11/18/2004 |
| Patrick R. Donahoe Deputy Postmaster General | Potter | 10/19/2009 |
| John E. Potter Postmaster General | Board of Governors | 11/12/2010 |

Endnote:

1. Post Office Department Memorandum dated October 8, 1965, from the director of Employee Benefits and Services Division, Bureau of Personnel, to the Deputy Assistant Postmaster General for Industrial Relations, Bureau of Personnel (in files of USPS Historian).