



NAPS Branch 61 NEWS



Volume 6 Issue 3 Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat. ~Theodore Roosevelt March 2006

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President's Corner

Short EAS staffing, vacancies, nor relief for EAS on extended leave or annual, no EAS pool relief, cries for help to upper management are unanswered or ignored...what to do, what to do? The Seattle District has mandated to reduce 204-B hours. The explanation that I got (which I went into more detail in past articles) in short, there is a belief that 204-B's were not used appropriately in this District. All 204-B usage needs to be approved by the MPOO or Postmaster. This would be consistent with the mandate. I also know from the District Manager that he expects his Direct Reports to do the 'right' thing and when a 204-B is needed the approval should be made. I know that 204-B's are being used in the district. I keep hearing there are EAS staffing shortages with Supervisors and Manag-

ers working long hours and six day weeks. My question to you (managers) is, have you requested to use 204-B's? If so, and you have been denied, I would like to hear the details. Was the request to fill a long term absence? To back-fill a vacancy and has it been posted?

If Supervisors expect to get their days off, they must request them. If a supervisor is scheduled to work on a day off and does not request that they receive the day off, history will show the day off was worked voluntarily. If the history shows that supervisors are being forced to work days off consistently, it is of the opinion of our NAPS NW Area Vice-President, Ben Clapp, the Seattle District would be told to stop this practice. Without hearing from you, you are tying NAPS hands

in trying to get relief for us. You need to begin asking for your day off and make sure you are documenting your request. This way we can determine a pattern of Supervisors being forced to work their days off. This we can push up into the appropriate channels to help bring us relief. There is an on-going problem in a certain Associate Office yet to be resolved. It is a situation where a supervisor position has been vacated. This position served as a relief Supervisor to cover DDO's and annual leave. The position has not been filled and 204-B's have been used up until the District mandate. These Supervisors and Managers have been working a long time without days off. This would be a situation that not only should a 204-B be used, but the position itself should be posted

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Professionalism as a Supervisor - by Dr. David C Picard

Supervisors, in the Postal Service, have some of the most difficult job duties and expectations of any position that is available. Not only do they have a multitude of reports to deliver on a daily basis, schedules to monitor, people to move around to get the mail out, anticipate work loads, and deal with their own supervisors' and managers' individual differences, they also have to work on a daily basis with their employees, most of whom are trying to do an excellent job and some that provide major challenges in interpersonal interactions and objectivity.

One of the **most critical** skills that good supervisors and managers pos-

sess are those of remaining a "step removed" from the verbal challenges of employees, including arguments, resistance to accepting directions, and resentments from setting limits and holding people responsible for their jobs. They also must deal with frictions between co-workers, perceived threats, founded and unfounded fears of employees. They must interact with employees who chronically resent management in general or, perhaps, a specific supervisor. Some employees file many grievances or go over the heads of their supervisors to make complaints; sometimes, no matter what is tried in order to improve the

interactions with such employees, the supervisor can feel like they will never change the negative perceptions of them that exist.

In the light of these daunting responsibilities and dilemmas, it is easy for a supervisor to lose their objectivity and their professionalism in dealing with their employees. They may resort to giving orders, yelling at employees when frustrated, or making negative comments to or about the employees that they "don't like", either directly or to a third party. Talking negatively about employees, or disclosing negative information about the person to someone who does not have a "need to know" sows dissention among

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President's Corner—from front page

and filled. The point here is that the EAS of this Associate Office are stepping up, though the problem has not been resolved yet, it is being pushed up through the channels. The same needs to be done elsewhere, but it does begin with you.

There are many theories and reasons that have been shared with me in an attempt to explain the conditions under which we are working. Of course, these are only theories and not based on any actual facts. One is the 'pressure' from Western Area and Headquarters is designed to motivate our Superiors to support us in our jobs, but the results are, too many of us are getting the heck kicked out of us, instead of being given the much needed mentoring we all need.

My favorite is "follow the money!" Why are the instructions to city carrier management not to count flats coming in with your parcels, SPURS, or from the BMC, but it is clearly noted in the Management Instructions that all cased volume is counted? Why did Western Area decide se-

quenced coverage's in DOIS no longer is credited to the street time – and as far as that goes, why, last year, did we only received credit for only one sequenced mailing on one day even if two or more gets delivered? How come we can't update DOIS Base information when carriers bid to new routes or when new deliveries are added? (And speaking of...Notice that DOIS itself was "updated" recently – a known problem with the system itself and now it's 'fixed'? And it's so much more user friendly to boot! Why are we to believe that this program is any better than the former program?) This particular theorist offers, we are simply being tricked. When you trick people into doing more than the workload would indicate, you save money. Even with using overtime hours, it saves because the Agency does not have to pay additional benefits or the cost of training new employees. Could all this be tied to the pay of our Postal Executives? Note PCES and Executives have a significant pay and evaluation process

Next Branch Meeting

The Branch 61 General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 28, 2006, at Federal Center South, 4735 East Marginal Way S Seattle, WA at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting place is where the Postal Business Center and Window Training Units are located. Please park in the visitor parking area immediately north of the building. You will need your Postal ID for entry.

that differs from EAS employees. Their pay is based on a national cost system and the bell curve for their location in the evaluation system is different from the bell curve for EAS scale employees. As in most "crimes" – if you follow the money you find the answers. Hmm...Anyone else want to offer up a theory?

Until next time...

Professionalism as a Supervisor - by David C. Picard, PhD (continued from Page 2)

employees and increases the resentments that already exist. Supervisors in such situations may demonstrate disparate treatment by denying requests from employees that they "don't like" while granting the same requests from other employees they do. At these times, it is increasingly likely that the supervisor (as well as the employee who is in conflict with the supervisor) will interpret almost any action or statement from the other in the most negative light. This will make it increasingly difficult for either of the parties to alter their perceptions of the other and attempt to come to a workable solution to the problem.

While both parties have responsibility for the negative interactions, it is the supervisor or manager that has the ultimate responsibility for initiating positive changes in the work relationship. Management has the authority in the workplace. They have the means to use their authority to improve a situation or make it worse. They are looked to as the leaders of the unit and as a model of what kind of behavior is acceptable. If supervisor behaviors towards an employee appear retaliatory or mean-spirited, the supervisor will lose respect, even from employees that may have negative feelings about the employee themselves. In addition, every supervisor is seen as reflecting management in general. Unfair and

derogatory actions and statements made by supervisors negatively color the image of all management in the Postal Service. Our concerted efforts in improving the workplace environment must be in the direction of demonstrating objectivity and fairness in all of our dealings with all employees (EAS and craft), not with just the ones with whom we get along.

The beginning of changing responses towards employees from negative to positive begins first with the supervisor's or manager's level of integrity of "owning" the inappropriate behaviors that they may be exhibiting. Justifying our actions or making excuses for what we are doing are sure-fire ways to avoid making necessary changes in our interactions. "I'm just trying to get them to do their work" is not a valid reason for begin insulting or derogatory. The job of a supervisor or manager requires an understanding that a higher expectation of professional behavior is essential in their role. Such acknowledgement is no easy task, for it requires that the person put aside their resentment, hurt feelings and, perhaps, years of anger toward an employee. However, without such self-honesty, efforts to change will be greatly jeopardized.

Training and consultation are invaluable tools in altering such communication styles. There

are seminars that give strategies to managers on how to approach employees with performance and conduct problems. EAP counselors can be used as consultants, helping supervisors to find ways to cope with the negative feelings present and discover alternative ways of addressing such concerns while showing respect for the employee. If appropriate, the supervisor can also use their own manager for problem-solving and finding neutral ways of addressing employee concerns. The Workplace Improvement Analyst is available to help brainstorm ideas on how to approach challenging employees as well. Suggestions can also be sought through other Human Resource departments.

None of these efforts will have much success, however, if the manager or supervisor does not stop and think before they say or do something regarding the employee. Without thinking ahead of time and spending some time planning how to handle difficult situations, we all tend to resort to what we "know" best and have used the most. Thoughtful and deliberate actions are critical in order to make such changes.

It is a challenging task to change the way we behave towards others, especially when supervisors, themselves, are often treated poorly. It is, however, the mark of a superior supervisor or manager -- the kind of supervisors and manager for which the Postal Service has great need. Not all applicants are cut out for such a job. But for those that are, they are indispensable.

Legislative Update - (by Bruce Moyer, NAPS Legislative Chair)

Postal Reform Awaits Appointment of House Conferees

Since February 9 nearly a month ago, when the Senate passed its postal reform measure, the pace of action on postal reform has slowed once again. The next major step will involve conference negotiations between representatives of the Senate and House to bridge the differences between the House and Senate-passed bills. Those conference talks will determine the ultimate face of postal reform -- and whether NAPS and other groups can support the final bill. The conference measure, once negotiated, must return to each chamber for its final approval before going to the President for signature and becoming law.

Last month, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) appointed the Senate's eight conferees: Senators Susan Collins (R-ME), Ted Stevens (R-AK); George Voinovich (R-OH), Norm Coleman (R-MN); Robert Bennett (R-UT), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Daniel Akaka (D-AK), and Tom Carper (D-DE).

House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL)

has not yet announced the delegation of House conferees. Although pre-conference discussions between Senate and House staff have begun, the heavy lifting will be performed by the conferees themselves.

As the Senate prepared to take action on its postal reform measure in late January, the Postal Service belatedly announced that it definitively had come to the conclusion that it could not embrace the House or Senate bills, either because of uncertainty over pension reform, or the fear that both bills would cede too much power to a new regulatory authority, or fail to give USPS enough authority to cut costs.

The consensus of postal reform proponents since then has drowned out USPS anxieties, believing that the total value of both bills, while different in some respects, remains significant enough to validate their passage, assuming that an acceptable conference deal can be reached.

Overall, both the House and Senate bills are similar in a number of respects. Most important, they seek to provide the Postal Service with a new business model that provides greater flexibility, including a new rate setting process that is more transparent, flexible and predictable. But differences between the House and Senate or with the White House remain on five issues.

Here's a quick summary:

CSRS Escrow Fund - Disputes over whether to maintain or repeal the escrow requirement, created in 2003 by Congress to respond to USPS over-funding of the Civil Service Retirement Trust Fund, center on the budget impact of its repeal. The escrow fund, into which the Postal Service has continued to overpay its CSRS retirement contributions, is counted in the unified federal budget, and the Administration argues that a reduction in USPS payments will create a hit on the budget by reducing federal revenues and increasing the federal deficit. The proponents of the House and Senate bills say that is not true, insisting that their bills are budget neutral because they create require USPS to pay more into the federal purse for future retiree health insurance costs. The two bills differ in

their payment schedule for amortizing the health care liability.

Military Retirement Costs - The CSRS military pension issue is also a product of the 2003 law, transferring from the Treasury to USPS the obligation to cover military retirement costs of postal employees in the Civil Service Retirement System, a \$27 billion obligation. Here again, both bills take similar approaches, returning the payment obligation to the Treasury, on the premise that costs of military service should be borne through general revenues (and taxpayers), not postal revenues (or ratepayers). The Administration resists the notion of sticking the Treasury with the tab, however, saying that the pension liability arose because of USPS hiring decisions, and that USPS should pay CSRS-related pension costs the same way it already does FERS-related pension costs.

Rate Setting Flexibility - Both bills permit the Postal Service to raise postal rates in line with inflation, generally keeping rate hikes at or below the Consumer Price Index. And they also allow the Postal Service to exceed the rate cap when emergency conditions arise. The kinds of emergencies the two bills cover varies, however, with the Senate taking a more restrictive approach, limiting USPS flexibility to "unexpected and extraordinary" situations like a biological or chemical attack. Mailers and the White House favor more narrow USPS discretion to assure that rates remain down. The Postal Service and employee organizations, on the other hand, favor greater flexibility in a wider set of situations, as the House bill provides, allowing variance where "reasonable and equitable and necessary," such as when gas prices suddenly spike.

"Banking Authority" and the Rate Cap - The Senate bill authorizes the Postal Service to raise postage rates up to 2 percent above the Consumer Price Index in any year, to the extent that any "unused" aggregate authority exists, based upon rates over the past five years that were set below the CPI rate cap. The House bill does not contain such banking authority

Single Piece Parcels - The Senate bill continues to permit USPS to keep its prices on single piece parcel post low by

**NAPS Seattle Branch 61
Financial Statement
February 2006**

Beginning Bank Balance \$15,000.56

Income

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Member Dues | \$3,062.00 |
| Interest | 3.70 |
| Total Income | \$3065.70 |

Expenses

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Legal Expenses | 318.00 |
| Branch Office Rent | \$1,031.00 |
| Leg. Trng Seminar Adv. | 500.00 |
| Door Prizes | 25.00 |

Total Expenses \$1,874.00

Difference Income/Exp 1,191.70

Ending Bank Balance \$16,192.26

Return Service Requested

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

| Notice—Dues Increase - by Rich Wilson | Legislative Update - (continued from Page 3) | Interesting WEB Sites |
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| <p>This is your notice that the Executive board as passed a motion in January, to raise dues by \$1.00 per pay period. Per Article XIII of Branch 61 bylaws, the first announcement of the intended dues increase was announced. We will vote to approve the dues increase at our March 28, 2006 meeting.</p> <p>In the last few years the amount NAPS HQ keeps for their operation has increased twice, at a rate of \$0.50 each time. At first, Branch 61 Executive Board agreed to absorb these increases. Your branch can no longer afford this accommodation.</p> <p>There are several additional reasons for increasing the dues, among them are increased legal defense costs, Investigative Interview costs and the increased rates for travel associated with the National Convention, Northwest Area Convention and Legislative Training Seminars. Come to the General Membership meeting on March 29. Let us hear from you.</p> | <p>not requiring USPS to fully attribute their costs, permitting single piece parcels to remain in the monopoly-covered or “market-dominant” category of postal products and services under the new law. The House version would alter that framework, however, placing single piece parcels in the “competitive products” category, likely requiring the Postal Service to raise significantly its single piece parcel prices to cover costs. Competitors, such as UPS and FedEx, favor the House approach because of its pro-competitive impact, while the Postal Service, mailers, and the employee groups all support the Senate version.</p> <p>NAPS delegates to the Legislative Training Seminar, April 2-5, will press for meaningful reform and positive action on these issues during their upcoming meetings on the Hill.</p> <p>You can learn more about postal reform and the outcome of the conference discussions on these issues, by checking out the NAPS website (http://www.naps.org/Legislative_News/reform.html), where continuing updates are posted.</p> | <p>Craig’s List – Sell Anything http://www.craigslist.com</p> <p>Drugs.com – Medical Dictionary http://www.drugs.com/lisinopril.html</p> <p>Pacific Science Center http://www.pacsci.org</p> <p>Find A Lawyer http://www.findlaw.com/</p> <p>Vonage – VOIP Telephone http://www.vonage.com/</p> <p>NAPS http://www.naps.org/index.shtml</p> <p>Airport Information http://www.quickaid.com/</p> <p>Urban Legend Reference Pages http://www.snopes.com/snopes.asp</p> <p>Grammar and Style http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/</p> <p>Federal Government Information http://www.fedworld.gov/</p> <p>The Urban Dictionary http://www.urbandictionary.com/</p> <p><i>Do you know of a good WEB Site? Share it with us at: branch61@comcast.net We’d really like to hear from you!</i></p> |