

# Contract Mediation Ending

June 4, 2019

On June 3,

President Mark Dimondstein and Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman reported to the APWU National Executive Council (NEC) that the contract mediator stated that the APWU and the USPS were too far apart, and further discussions would not lead to a new collective bargaining agreement. The statement effectively ends the mediation.

“We invoked mediation to make sure we pursued every avenue to reach a good contract for the membership,” President Dimondstein said. On the June call, the NEC was provided a full update about the mediation and negotiation process, and given the opportunity to question President Dimondstein (lead negotiator) and Director Zimmerman (chief spokesman).

The Mediation started with a meeting between the mediator appointed by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and members of the 2018 National Negotiating Committee, including the Industrial Relations Director, Executive Vice President, Secretary- Treasurer and Clerk, Maintenance, and MVS Craft Directors. Assistant Craft Directors were also invited to participate. Anyone who could not physically attend the meeting could participate via teleconference.

The process continued with in-depth joint meetings with the mediator and chief spokespersons of both the USPS and the APWU.

Following day-long meetings with the chief spokespersons, the individual Craft Directors and the Assistant Directors met in separate daylong sessions with their USPS counterparts and the mediator.

After a series of these meetings, the mediator declared the parties were too far apart. “While we were hopeful that mediation would be successful, we have been vigorously preparing for interest arbitration,” said Director Zimmerman. “We are working hard to develop our case and preparing evidence to support our demands.”

The next stage of the process is for the USPS and the APWU to jointly select an interest arbitrator to chair the three-member panel. This panel will hear the case for the new contract. Once the arbitrator is selected and appointed, the parties will ask for dates for to begin arbitration hearings.

## Fighting Back Against Outrageous Demands

**Mark Dimondstein**

June 3, 2019

*(This article first appeared in the March/April 2019 issue of the American Postal Worker magazine)*

The next two stages in the battle to achieve a good new union contract are mediation (currently underway and projected to last 45 days) followed by the interest arbitration process. Be fully aware that management has presented drastic and regressive contract proposals. They are an insult and danger to you, the hard working and dedicated postal employee. We are outraged and have said, no way!

**Let me share some “lowlights” of postal management’s outrageous demands:**

- No pay increases applied to your current wage level and to be carried forward into the future. Management claims you are overpaid, and should only get a stipend in the form of a one-time “lump sum.”
- Eliminating the twice-a-year Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) which help us keep up with inflation.
- Undercutting our long-standing protections against layoffs. Workers with less than six years of career service would have to wait fifteen years to secure lay-off protection and new employees would have none.
- A new “third” tier of career employees with lower wages and fewer benefits, taking us backwards and killing the opportunity for our family members and coming generations to obtain good paying union postal jobs.
- Increase of clerk craft PSE non-careers from 20 percent to 25 percent, thereby undercutting our successes in converting tens of thousands of PSEs to career.
- Reintroducing 10 percent of PSEs into the Maintenance and the Motor Vehicle crafts and undermining veteran hiring into maintenance career positions.
- An end to the 50-mile limit on excessing employees to other installations, potentially forcing workers to relocate hundreds of miles from home.
- Other USPS proposals include abolishing penalty overtime pay, automatic subcontracting of certain custodial work, introducing PSEs into level 18 offices to the detriment of career workers, a universal PSE with no distinction of duties, and the elimination of “on the clock” union time for workers and shop stewards to address contract violations.

Whether you are a Maintenance, Clerk, Motor Vehicle or Support Service worker, career or non-career, full-time or part-time, your standard of living, your job security and rights have been targeted.

But take heart – we are union strong! Your union leadership has not, and will not, agree to any of these concessionary demands and allow management to trample on the progress made over decades of struggle.

Throughout these negotiations, the union has presented an array of proposals for good wage increases, maintaining COLAs, expanding the career workforce, addressing the management-created hostile work

environment, uplifting PSEs, bridging the divisive three-tier wage structure and increasing job security. We will be fighting for these proposals (and more) in interest arbitration.

Since the 1971 formation of the APWU, we have been to interest arbitration numerous times, with mixed results. In the previous round of collective bargaining in 2015, I led us through national negotiations, including the long interest arbitration process. We proved successful in securing a good union contract that enhanced job security, increased the career work force (including an all-career maintenance workforce), won annual wage increases, maintained our COLA for career employees and improved PSE pay and benefits.

With the current anti-worker, anti-union climate in Washington, D.C. and the real threats of postal privatization and to our collective bargaining rights, interest arbitration will be a tough battle. But we promise to leave no stone unturned. Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman and I have mobilized the union's resources in this all-out effort, which includes economists, industrial engineers, legal staff, researchers and the Maintenance, Motor Vehicle and Support Services officer expertise.

The APWU will not back down as we continue "Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow." And we will do it together from the workroom floor contract campaign to the interest arbitration proceedings. Stay strong and stay tuned!