

Membership participation: the key to success

By Tony Carobine, President

May 1st marked the 130th anniversary of a significant event in labor history. On that day in 1886, 350,000 workers gathered in Chicago to demonstrate for the eight-hour workday. Over time, because of the workers' continued perseverance that tragically included some dying for this cause, the eight-hour workday became a reality.

Throughout the history of labor, most successes came about because of the participation and determination of ordinary working people. Today, the issues are different but the need for working people to unite and fight back is still as relevant and necessary as it was so long ago.

The value of communication

Central to all of this activity is communication. External communication as employed in our union's "Stop Staples" campaign or "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service" are two examples of the value of using communication to unite working people for a common cause.

Equally important (but not always given due attention) is internal communication. What is the most effective way to communicate with the membership? The union publication. It remains the "flagship of communication." A publication is tangible, in other words something the members can see, and a medium that brings the union into the homes of the membership and their families. Even in this age of electronic communication, union members still look to union publications as the primary place to find information about their union.

Also, whether directing our efforts to communicate either internally or externally, we should keep in mind the adage "in order for a message to become unforgettable it must be repeated several times."

Prepare for November

We are living in challenging times and are in the midst of not only a continuous battle to save our livelihood but a well-organized war against all workers in our country. Our future and that of our families greatly depend upon the outcome of the November election.

Therefore, between now and the election we need to do everything we can to help elect individuals who will support our issues and will stand up for working people. Based on the performance of our elected representatives it isn't a difficult task to learn who supports us and who doesn't.

We need to begin now communicating with the membership about the November election. Through our publications we can inform our members (and their families)

about the significance of the election; educate them about the issues; advise them about which candidates support postal workers; help them become registered voters; and constantly remind them about the importance of voting on Election Day, Tuesday, November 8.

Remember, in order for a message to become unforgettable, it must be repeated several times. It's not enough to tell our members once about issues that affect them and their families. It's a practice that must be repeated over and over again.

I repeat, throughout the history of labor, most successes came about because of the participation and determination of ordinary working people. Union publications are a great way to generate that participation!

Repeat the message

A husband and wife have been married for about 40 years but the wife grown increasingly unhappy. After all her efforts to communicate her feelings to her husband, she finally gives up resolving the conflict herself.

So she persuades her husband to go with her to their minister for counseling. The minister asks the husband what he sees as the problem in their relationship and the husband details the wife's growing solitude and grumpiness.

Then the minister turns to the wife and asks her what she identifies as the

difficulty. "My husband never tells me he loves me," she answers. "What do you have to say about that the minister asks?"

The husband looks downright insulted. "I told her I loved her the day we got married 40 years ago. If I ever change my mind, I'll let her know!"

Unlike the husband who thought it was enough to tell his wife one time in 40 years that he loved her, it's not enough to tell our members once about issues that affect them and their families, it's a practice that must be repeated over and over again.



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This is my opinion – what's yours?

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

Have you seen an editorial in a union publication lately? Have you written one? In fact, do you know what an editorial is? As the editor of a union newsletter a person becomes the caretaker of the local or state's property, namely the newsletter. One of the main functions of the editor is to be a representative for that local or state affiliate through the publication.

Never in the history of the American labor movement have editorials been more important than today. The very existence of labor organizations and the benefits they have earned through many years of collective bargaining are continually being threatened. Every union leader should be taking up arms to defend the rights and benefits of the members of the labor movement. Labor editors (and other officers too) should be writing about the threats to labor unions and working people in our country today.

Unless stopped, the aggression will only continue until it strips all of the workers of our country of their fair wages and benefits. It will continue until there is no longer a middle class but only the very rich and very poor.

The time is quickly passing us by for union leaders to take action in this fight by American labor. We can no longer hide from the problem and continue to do nothing while we state that it is **not our problem**. During World War II (to paraphrase a German religious leader) it was said that the army came after one group of people after another and I

said it didn't concern me because they were not after me. Then they came after me and there was no one left to help me.

My brothers and sisters we are at that same crossroads. The time for action is here and now. To paraphrase our current

“ . . . we are real union leaders. We are our brother's and sister's keepers. We stand hand in hand with them!”

national president, we cannot be a one issue union. We cannot be dedicated solely to grievances. We have to be a well-rounded union with a focus on a multitude of issues that face labor unions today.

If we have never written an editorial the time to start is now. If we only write about postal issues the time to put aside our tunnel vision is now. Each and every one of us should stand up and shout; **we are real union leaders. We are our brother's and sister's keepers. We stand hand in hand with them!**

We should begin today by placing our present focus on writing editorials in support of the rest of the labor movement. We cannot afford to wait until the union busters destroy the labor movement one unit at a time. We cannot wait until they finally get to us. APWU local and state publications should be filled with editorials about present problems and then keep up with the times in unionism. This is my editorial opinion – what's yours?

More productive writer

To become a more productive writer, toss away negative thoughts about your skills and think positive! Have you ever made any of the following assertions? “I'm a good writer but a slow one.” “I can't do my best work unless it's quiet.” “. . . unless I'm well rested.” “. . . if I have a backache.”

Try saying instead: “I get big results fast.” “I can write anywhere, anytime.” “I write great leads.” These statements, made to yourself, don't even have to be proven to

start erasing old, self-limiting stereotypes in your mind.

Looking back

Everyone who retires has at least one zinger of a story worth telling. Whenever longtime members retire from the postal service, get them to share their best stories – to entertain and educate the reader and to spotlight the retirees at this important juncture of their lives.

Where is your sense of humor?

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

I have been a member of the Postal Press Association since May 1980! A long time I am sure you will agree. I am proud that I am still here and publishing two newsletters. One for my local – *The Black Swamp Outrider* – Toledo Ohio Area Local, and one for my state, the *Ohio Postal Worker*.

Part of the enjoyment of being a member of the PPA is getting all the newsletters from around the country. In case you were wondering whether anyone reads your paper – I do! Unfortunately the number of publications being mailed to fellow PPA members is down. Because of budget cuts in most cases (including my own local) members are not sending their papers out to all PPA members. When the cost is added up – number of papers printed and postage – it isn't all that much. If you can't mail every month to all PPA members perhaps you could rotate each month. That is what I am doing.

The one thing I truly miss out of the

papers I do get is cartoons. Original cartoons are few and far between now. Years ago we had a good number of people who were quite good at cartoons. The people who are on the workroom floor day in and day out can tell you some funny stories about the post office. If a good cartoon is printed once and sent out you can be sure it will be copied (and hopefully credited) over and over. A sense of humor is so important, especially in times like these.

I am wondering if perhaps we haven't asked our members if there is anyone out there who can draw and add captions either alone or with some help from a fellow member or members. A great cartoon can really pull people into reading your paper. They can't wait to see what the cartoonist will come up with next. Everyone likes to laugh! While cartoons aren't always neces-

sarily funny – they can educate and help people see things in a different way from what they might normally.

If you are not lucky enough to have someone to come up with a cartoon now and then, the PPA can help in that area. President Tony Carobine sends out monthly labor cartoons by Huck/Konopacki that you are encouraged to use in your publications. I know things aren't that great right now for postal workers but we need to make the effort to not be gloom and doom all the time. That will turn members off. So try each issue to have a cartoon, a joke or two, a funny story – just something to make our readers smile. We can't solve all the problems of the post office but we can at least give them a laugh, a chuckle, a little ray of sunshine and maybe a little hope that tomorrow will be better.

Nameplates: elements of identity

Every publication benefits from a distinctive nameplate (also called banner or flag) announcing with vigor the name of the publication. Therefore, it should stand out and grab the readers' attention.

It also gives the organization identity as owner of the publication. Along with the name of the paper in big, bold print, the nameplate should include, in smaller print: who the paper belongs to, such as "Official Publication of the Any town Local, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO." Volume and Number. (The volume is used to record how many years the paper has been published. The number would indicate what issue it is for the current year. For example: Volume 5, Number 9 means this is the fifth year the paper is being published and the ninth issue of the current year.)

Des Moines, Iowa site of 2017 PPA Conference

The Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino will be the site of the 2017 Biennial Conference of the APWU National Postal Press Association.

Hosted by the Iowa Postal Workers Union, the conference will take place from Thursday, August 3 through Saturday, August 5, 2017 with a pre-conference session on Wednesday, August 2.

A guestroom rate of \$129.00 per day single or double occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference, in addition to three days before and three days after the actual meeting dates. Current tax rate is 12%. Prairie Meadows will provide free shuttle service from Des Moines International Airport, complimentary Internet access and no charge for parking a vehicle.

Commenting on behalf of the PPA Advisory Council, PPA President Tony Carobine said, "We encourage PPA members, APWU officers and interested members to plan now on joining us in Des Moines on August 2-5, 2017. The PPA Conference is a gathering you won't want to miss."

Further details will be forthcoming as they become available.



Have we lost our way?

By Hank Greenberg, Honorary Member
PPA Advisory Council

There's a lot of talk today about union membership and the direction it's going. Everyone has the answer – and no one has the answer. It's worth reviewing some of the problems we face in the hope that someone reading this may come up with a solution.

Everyone's fall guy is "apathy". Apathy is a major problem within the membership and maybe it's the biggest problem. But just saying "apathy" is not going to solve the problem. For example, has anyone asked the members why they are apathetic; why they just aren't interested, why they don't care?

Go into any post office and you will find members who are more excited about last Sunday's sporting event than what the union is doing to protect their job. Hey everybody, it's **your job** we're talking about! When "the sporting event" is over, you still have a mortgage to pay and a family to provide for.

There was a time when one office had a problem and postal workers all over the country rose up in support. Today, you find



people saying, "It's not my office so it's not my problem." Honestly, it's everyone's problem.

What are we missing? Where did we go wrong? Is it a general attitude in society today or just in the post office? Whatever it is, time is running out and we need to do everything possible to get everyone to focus on the issues we face – and we're facing these issues now.

It might be worth drawing up a list of

questions and survey the members. Put the questionnaire in your union newspaper. The members don't have to sign it – you can put a box in the swing room so they can return the survey. (Give them enough space to vent.) We might find that "our" issues are not necessarily "their" issues. If true, this will show we have failed to adequately inform the membership, or understand their concerns.

More than fifty years ago I became editor of the Miami local paper. I believed then, and I believe now, that the local union newspaper is the single most important vehicle to educate the members and motivate the members. Articles about members, their opinions, their suggestions – give them a true sense of belonging.

If your local does not have a paper (or publish one on a regular basis), don't be surprised if your members do not know what's going on and believe every rumor they hear. You will always hear more dissatisfaction from people who are uninformed.

I congratulate every editor for the **important work** you are doing and I encourage you to stick with it because your efforts just might answer the question: are you part of the solution, or part of the problem?

Think of your local union newspaper as a Facebook that doesn't require WiFi.



A local union newspaper has information more important to you than a hash tag about your cousin's hernia operation.



Your local union newspaper, not Google, will help you understand what's happening to your job in the post office.



Think of the monthly union meeting as a "play date" for grown-ups.



The world is coming to an end! More information at the union meeting.

Report writing: speeches, conventions

When representatives from your organization attend a conference or convention talk to them before they go, so they'll know what you need for the paper. If they just hand you a rousing minute-by-minute agenda of everything that happened from 8:30 a.m. on – starting with the flag salute – they'll put readers to sleep. Worse yet, they may come back with nothing – just a vague thanks to the members for having such a great time at their expense. What you really need is a story that shows readers what's in it for them – why it was worth their money to send someone to this meeting.

A report doesn't mean dutifully noting everything that happened. It means picking the highlights – the most exciting and meaningful happenings – and giving readers a feel for why they're important. Ask people to take notes on rousing speeches and classes, including facts and ideas that

particularly impressed them. Ask them to take down a few quotes, word-for-word, of clever statements that really hit the nail on the head, or that made the entire audience stand up and applaud.

Ask them to take pictures of people hard at work – not staring at the camera as they're shot. Ask them to bring back a program with speakers' names spelled right plus other handouts – many can be turned into great articles.

Ask people to think about how this experience will make them better activists and help them better serve the group, or how it applies to local problems.

Will you write such articles, or do you expect delegates to write their own? If it's the delegates' job, give them pointers on writing. Suggest they liven up the report by interviewing leaders and other delegates. If you do the write-up, tell delegates you'll interview them when they return.

COMING SOON

Federal Elections, Union Publications, Union Websites booklet

The 2016 version of the PPA booklet, *Federal Elections, Union Publications and Union Websites* is currently in print production and is expected to be sent to PPA members soon. Working families have an enormous stake in the November 8 election as control of the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives will be determined.

This booklet contains guidelines for including information in a union publication and websites regarding the November election for federal representatives along with regulations pertaining to APWU COPA solicitations. Also discussed are techniques used by labor organizations in past federal elections that generated a high level of participation by union members and their families on Election Day.

Following is an excerpt from the booklet concerning material permitted in a publication if it is mailed to the local (or state organization's) restricted class. A local union's restricted class is limited to APWU members (including retirees who pay retiree dues) and their families and executive or administrative personnel of the local union and their families. Executive and administrative personnel of locals are salaried employees in a managerial or professional position.

Material permitted in your publication if it is mailed only to your local's restricted class:

1. Information about the APWU Committee on Political Action (COPA). Note: Any article that encourages contributions to COPA is considered a solicitation.

When including a COPA solicitation in your paper, send that issue of the paper only to your restricted class, and not, for example to other unions, public officials, etc.

The following statement must accompany information in a publication that encourages COPA contributions or provides information about how to make COPA contributions. The statement must be clearly and conspicuously displayed.

"Contributions or gifts to COPA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. COPA will use the contributions it receives for politi-

cal purposes, including making contributions to candidates for federal, state and local offices, and addressing political issues of public importance. Contributions to COPA are voluntary. More or less than the suggested amount may be given, and the amount given or the refusal to give will not benefit or disadvantage the person being solicited. Federal law requires political action committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year."

2. A column or editorial written by an APWU member stating his/her personal views on a partisan candidate. This includes personal endorsement of candidates and urging others to vote for a particular candidate. Any article that implies support for a candidate should include a statement that it represents the views of a particular local member or of the local, as appropriate. This can be done by inserting a phrase such as "in my opinion" or a by-line.

3. Publication of information about a candidate in the form of a resume of his

or her qualifications for office, or a "score card" of positions on issues or voting records. (Note: Reprinting of campaign material received from a candidate for federal office is prohibited.

4. A "bona fide paid political advertisement" paid for by a candidate or political party. You must charge for the advertisement at your established rate and payment **must** be received prior to publication.

5. Encourage members to register and vote and to vote for a particular candidate.

6. Encourage members to volunteer to work for a particular candidate or candidates involved in federal, state and local campaigns.

7. Publicize upcoming candidate events such as political rallies, meet the candidate forums, etc. You can also report on what happened at such events, including discussing the points made by the candidate in his or her speech.

8. Expression of an opinion on an issue or legislation; for example, support for Medicare in such a way that a "reasonable person" would interpret this as urging the election of a particular candidate(s).

Pre-convention workshops planned

The PPA will be participating in the pre-convention workshops sponsored by the APWU Research & Education Department being held on **Friday, August 19** at the Swan & Dolphin Hotels, Orlando, Florida.

Two half-day workshops will be presented by the PPA. ***Reaching the Membership – Communicating at the Local Level:*** Examines the importance of information sharing using various mediums with special emphasis on the process of producing a member-oriented, high quality, highly read, union publication. (10:00 am -1:00 pm)

Legal Issues and Union Communications: A review of editorial policies, union regulations, libel, copyright and federal election laws that apply to hardcopy and electronic forms of communication. (2:30 pm -5:30 pm)

More information on the workshops, as well as the online registration process can be found on the APWU's website at, www.apwu.org "Pre-Convention Workshops."



Nine steps to effective political communication

When it comes to politics, members want information – not orders – from their unions.

They want to know about issues – not partisan agendas. Following are suggestions for successful political communication.

1. Issues come first, candidates and parties second. Members want political action to be based on issues. Working to elect pro-worker candidates is a means to win on important issues – not an end in itself.

2. Members want information, not voting instructions. Before members will respect endorsements, they need to see

what led to them; issue positions, voting records and other facts that will help them make up their own minds.

3. Present information credibly and objectively to overcome members' distrust of politics. Members trust their union more than many other sources, but they are extremely skeptical about politics. Information sources should be cited, for example, and avoid unbelievable claims about how good or bad a candidate may be.

4. Downplay partisan rhetoric and stress the unions' role as an independent voice for working people. Members don't want their unions drawn into the excessive partisanship that Americans generally consider the downfall of our country's political system.

5. Unions should be watchdogs that hold politicians accountable. Because union members are very cynical about politics, it should be made clear their union recognizes the danger of betrayal by politicians. Those who gain support should then be held accountable.

6. Members want unions to represent their interests as workers, focusing on work-related issues and advancing a populist economic agenda.

7. Union political action should always be "of, by and for" the members. Members should be provided with oppor-

tunities to make their voices heard in the political process, through membership surveys, public candidate forums and website addresses and toll-free numbers on political materials.

8. Information is also the key to increasing participation. Members strongly support get-out-the-vote efforts. Because members who are well-informed are much more likely to vote, educating them about the issues and candidates is a key way to boost turnout.

9. Unions are more effective when addressing the concerns of specific union audiences. Do not rely on a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Target specific messages to specific union audiences; men or women, African Americans, Latinos, younger or older workers, for example.

Increase participation

Preparing members and their families for the upcoming election is quite an involved task, but nonetheless a vital one. Communication is the key and it should be a continuous effort in the days and months leading up to this important day. The best way to increase turnout is to educate members about the issues and candidates. Armed with this knowledge, members and their families are more likely to participate and will make informed choices when going to the polls on Election Day.

When you can't get started

If, like many, you occasionally hit a wall when you're trying to write and just can't get started, you might want to:

- **Write** a letter to someone about what you would say if you could only get started.
- **Decide** on a reward you'll give yourself if you write a page; then get started and really give yourself the reward if you earn it.
- **Open** your dictionary randomly, and without looking, point to a word, and use that word in your first sentence to get started – even if it's silly.
- **Talk** your article or report into a recorder.
- **Begin** in the middle or the end if the beginning is too difficult for you to get under way.
- **Do something** that bores you for twice as long as you think you can stand it; then write.
- **If you're** immobilized by having to correct everything as you go, get two hats, one labeled "writer" and the other labeled "editor." Tell yourself you can't edit when wearing the "writer" hat and vice versa. Switch at increasingly longer intervals.
- **With a recorder** going, have someone interview you about what you'd like to say. Transcribe the recording and use that as a rough draft.

Communicating more often in more manageable bites

Like many locals, yours may have a hard time producing a publication that sticks to a regular schedule or that appears more often than four to eight times per year. But it's crucial to communicate frequently and regularly to convey the image of an "issues advocacy" union. Irregular and infrequent publications will have a hard time getting readers activated about what the union is doing, especially if all that is reported is what already is done.

If you can't produce a regular monthly publication, consider complementing

your current paper with one that is easier to produce more frequently and regularly. This may mean running fewer long articles and fewer pages and using a simpler design-settling perhaps for just a one-page, two-sided bulletin containing short items. The trade-off is that you will be reaching people in a timelier manner on issues. You will stand a better chance of involving them in the resolution of those issues, and you'll be more likely to create the impression of an activist organization.

Help pin down victory on Election Day!



How? Just follow these steps.

1. Through your publication between now and November, inform your members about the significance of this election.
2. Educate your members about postal worker and working family issues and where the candidates stand on these issues.
3. Provide voter registration information and encourage members and family members to make sure they are registered to vote.
4. Constantly remind them about the importance of voting on **Election Day, Tuesday, November 8.**
5. Remember the adage, "In order for a message to become unforgettable it must be repeated several times!"

Don't worry – be happy

It's a simple philosophy, but one that can have vast repercussions. Research shows that most illnesses, including headaches, backaches, heart disease, and digestive ail-



ments, can be caused or influenced by our feelings. A positive attitude will help you work better, too. Optimism gives you energy and enthusiasm.

Next time you're ready to give in to the blues, try these tips.

1. Don't take everything so seriously. There are few problems that have truly monumental consequences.

2. Try to see the positive aspects of problems. You can find a bright side in almost every situation – if you look hard enough.

3. Smile. It's easier than frowning, which requires 78 muscles. A smile uses only 14.

4. Use positive people as role models. Focus on someone who seems to make the best of any situation. This person can show you how he or she maintains that attitude.

5. Learn to accept situations over which you have no control. It can be frustrating to see a problem that needs fixing, but sometimes it is either inappropriate or simply impossible for you to help.

6. Be satisfied with results once you've done your best. You can't do any better, so don't focus on your limitations.

7. Be part of the solution. It's more challenging – and inspiring – to try to fix

problems than just to point them out and dwell on them.

8. Take time to reward yourself. You deserve appreciation, from yourself, as well as from others.

9. Expect the best, not the worst both of people and situations.

10. Appreciate the good things that happen. Stop focusing on what is lacking in your life. Count your blessings, not your troubles.

It's not always easy to maintain a positive attitude. Like most things, it requires work. But the results are worth it!

Design concerns

Design is one of the areas in which great editors separate themselves from the rest. Your articles and information should be presented in a format that the reader will enjoy. You want it to look lively and fresh. Otherwise you run the risk of having your words go unread altogether. With all of your other editorial responsibilities, you must concentrate your efforts on developing a winning layout and design. And once you have it, stick with it.

Take a look at other newsletters that you like. What do you find most appealing about them?

You might also want to work with your

printer who can review your information, listen to what you are trying to achieve with your newsletter, and come up with some design and layout options for you to choose from.

When designing a winning layout, remember the lessons from font selection: Use no more than two or three typefaces that will compliment your body type. Successful editors will use three or four type sizes with different story treatments, major pieces, secondary stories, sidebars or boxed items.

But remember to have fun. This is your creation and should reflect your personality and sense of style.