



Representing Postal Workers for Over 100 Years

San Antonio Alamo Area Local #195
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

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Fighting Back On-the-Clock

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By Clerk Division Director Clint Burelson

Are you tired of management knowingly and willfully violating the contract, providing poor service to the public and otherwise doing whatever they want? There are many ways to fight back and one way is on-the-clock. By utilizing the grievance procedure, you can get paid for improving the Postal Service while you are at work.

Grievances are On-the-Clock for a Reason

One of the reasons behind paying employees to address grievances is that it is in the interest of a good employer to do so. The employer is paying employees to do the important work of holding abusive, unethical and ignorant supervisors and managers accountable because violations of the contract and violations of basic moral decency have a negative impact upon the employer. A supervisor might violate the contract to make themselves look better than they are. Such violations of the contract can create larger problems for the employer down the road.

Another important reason behind the payment of employees to address violations at work is that the employer considers the grievance arbitration process a better option than workers striking and/or engaging in other collective actions.

Management's Mockery of the Grievance Procedure

The reason why management knowingly and willfully violates the contract is that they have determined it is in their interest to do so. Management counts on the fact that employees will not grieve every violation, that grievances may not all have the proper documentation, and that management can delay grievances to discourage participation in the grievance procedure.

Furthermore, management also unreasonably denies and delays stewards' requests for steward time and information in order to limit the ability of the union to hold management accountable. Management's decision to knowingly violate the contract undermines the grievance procedure as an effective mechanism to resolve disagreements.

Management's failure to honor their contract with

employees and respect the grievance arbitration process has a huge negative impact on our lives as postal workers and service to our communities. An appropriate response on our part is effective group actions such as petitions and informational pickets to stop the willful violations.

In addition, when management violates the contract it is important that we take time on-the-clock to grieve every violation and properly document every grievance. Taking time on-the-clock helps provide for a properly documented grievance. Also, management is less likely to violate the contract if it means many employees are on-the-clock addressing the violations.

Requesting Time on the Clock to Discuss Potential Grievances

Every employee has the right to talk to their steward on-the-clock after getting permission from their supervisor. Upon your request, it is the responsibility of your immediate supervisor to provide you with a steward. Under Article 17, the USPS authorizes payment for "the aggrieved and one Union steward for time actually spent in grievance handling, including investigation and meetings with the Employer."

Final Words

Our current approach is that the burden for enforcing the contract is mainly on our representatives with the cop out phrase, "That's what I pay my dues for." That only works when management honors the grievance procedure, which is not the case.

Our heroic stewards and officers cannot be the only ones fighting back. Imagine the impact if just 10 percent of the employees requested a steward every day to address the violations on-the-clock, that every violation was grieved, witness statements provided, and documents obtained through requests for information were submitted to document every violation. As we work toward effective group actions, employee participation in the grievance procedure is one way to build power and hold management accountable. That will improve our lives as workers and improve service to our communities.

