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# Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

## WE WON, BOYCOTT OVER!

### Union Pressure Credited with Postal Service's Decision to End Deal with Staples



APWU members and supporters rallying in El Cerrito, CA

After more than three years, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has announced it will end its controversial arrangement with Staples, Inc. The “Approved Shipper” program will be shut down by the end of February 2017.

In October 2013, Staples and the USPS cut a deal which allowed the business supply superstore to open mini post offices in 82 stores, staffed by Staples’ non-union employees and providing services including Priority Mail. The union representing workers at our nation’s post offices immediately pushed back. “We wasted no time swinging into action,” said American Postal Workers Union (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein.

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## Buy American, Buy Union



U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)

By U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)

It’s a basic principle: American tax dollars should go toward American-made products that support American jobs.

For decades, this has been the way we do things in this country. When we invest in building our infrastructure, we need to invest in our workers and businesses, which is why Congress has encouraged the use of American products in federal projects through “Buy America” provisions. They help ensure that our tax dollars are spent at plants in Cleveland, Ohio, and not in China, and that more products bear the “Made in America” label and the union bug.

Putting our tax dollars to work supporting jobs at home shouldn’t be a controversial issue – last month at a rally in Cincinnati, President-elect Trump said he planned to “Buy American and hire American.”

But in December, Speaker Paul Ryan stripped a “Buy America” provision from a water resources bill with no explanation – even as President-elect Donald Trump was promising to put American companies and workers first.

My Ohio colleague Senator Portman and I led a group of senators in a letter to Speaker Ryan and other leaders in the House and Senate demanding they restore

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**DO BUY**

# Valentine's Day

Be sure to look for these union-made products for your sweetheart this Valentines Day.

## SWEETS AND TREATS

- ♥ Allan Candy Company
- ♥ Brown & Haley
- ♥ Dare Foods Limited
- ♥ Frankford Candy & Chocolate
- ♥ Ghiradelli Chocolate Company
- ♥ Parrson's Candy Company
- ♥ Hershey Foods Corp.

*(Hershey operates a number of non-union manufacturing facilities in the U.S. and Mexico that produce Hershey products, including Reese Peanut Butter Cups and more)*

- ♥ Sconza Candy Company
- ♥ See's Candy
- ♥ Jelly Belly Candy Company
- ♥ Nestle USA
- ♥ Tootsie Roll Industries
- ♥ Russel Stover
- ♥ Necco

## WINE

- ♥ Andre Champagne
- ♥ Chateau Ste. Michelle
- ♥ Columbia Crest
- ♥ Saddle Mountain
- ♥ Farron Ridge
- ♥ Scheid Vineyards Inc.
- ♥ Balletto
- ♥ Charles Krug
- ♥ C.K. Mondavi
- ♥ C.R. Cellars
- ♥ Gallo of Sonoma
- ♥ Gallo Estate
- ♥ Turning Leaf
- ♥ Arbor Mist
- ♥ St. Supery
- ♥ Tott's Champagne

- ♥ Almaden
- ♥ Berelli Creel
- ♥ Bartles & James
- ♥ Black Box
- ♥ Carlo Rossi

## FLOWERS AND GIFTS

*These union supermarkets offer flower arrangements created by union workers.*

- ♥ Vons
- ♥ Safeway
- ♥ Pavillions
- ♥ Gelson's
- ♥ Costco
- ♥ Ralphs
- ♥ Giant
- ♥ Teleflora

*(Offered through Union Plus, union members save 20% on orders when the shop through the [www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org) website.)*

# WALK IN MY SHOES

## Patricia Miller — EEOC Federal Investigator; AFGE Local 3599

My name is Patricia Miller and I am a Federal Investigator with the EEOC Raleigh, N.C. Area office. I began my government career in 1991 with the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation agency as a Training Technician in the Human Resources Employment Development division.

In my former career, I was drawn to wanting to make a difference to individuals who had been mistreated in various areas of their lives. By not knowing their rights, they were unable to right these wrongs. I then began to prepare myself through education and volunteer work. This led me to EEOC with its mission to stop and remedy unlawful employment discrimination.

EEOC gave me the opportunity "to make the difference" by hiring me in April 1999 as a Federal Investigator. In 2013, I joined the Charlotte North Carolina District Systemic team. I have been involved in several systemic cases that have had a major impact of changing policies and practices in the area of ADA accommodation and Title VII for females and Blacks who have been denied hiring in Computer Science and the IT fields.

Being a member of the Union has been very rewarding. At EEOC, my AFGE Local 3599 Union Steward Johnnie Barrett and our National Council 216 are very helpful and provide great information about what the Union is doing for our members. As a member, I am able to voice my opinion on matters that could affect my fellow colleagues and me, such as not having the right tools needed to perform our mission successfully. Also, the Union took on the fight for us in a national overtime grievance to seek restitution for bargaining unit employees who had been denied their rightful compensation when performing duties outside their normal work hours. I can truly say that being a Union member has been great.



### WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

In 150 words or less—accompanied by a picture of you at work...Help us walk in your shoes. We're open to all union members, active, retired, laid off.

"We want rank and file members to help us to illustrate the rich, diverse tapestry of hard working men and women who make up the American labor movement. They are proud of their work and proud of the contributions they make to their communities," explains Union Label Department President Richard Kline. "We want to demonstrate to American consumers and businesses that union labor gives added value in quality and reliability to products and services that are bought and sold."

The pictures and stories we get will be published in the Label Letter and posted on the Department's website—and perhaps in posters and other promotional materials. E-mail a Walk in Your Shoes to: [unionlabel@unionlabel.org](mailto:unionlabel@unionlabel.org); or send by regular mail to:

#### Walk In My Shoes

c/o Union Label & Service Trades Dept. (AFL-CIO)  
815 16th St. NW,  
Washington, DC 20005 ■

## Spotlight the Label

### AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION



The American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO (APWU) represents more than 200,000 United States Postal Service (USPS) employees and retirees, and nearly 2,000 private-sector mail workers.

For more than four decades, APWU has fought for dignity and respect on the job for the workers we represent, as well as for decent pay and benefits and safe working conditions. As an AFL-CIO affiliate, the APWU supports the struggle for social and economic justice for all working families.

Depending on their occupation, APWU members belong to the Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle, or Support Services divisions.

Our union is a democratic organization comprised of dues-paying members who belong to more than 900 state and local unions and retiree chapters in every state and territory. APWU officers are directly elected by union members.

The union's state and local affiliates are autonomous organizations that rely on the national union to represent their interests in contract negotiations and in national-level grievances. The union negotiates a national Collective Bargaining Agreement and fights for our members' interests on Capitol Hill. ■

# Put a Union Label On It! Infrastructure Spending Under the New Administration



**O**ur communities need improvements. Energy, transportation (roadways, railways and waterways), and water systems – our Infrastructure – is falling apart. No one in the United States disagrees that our failing infrastructure needs massive investment but, unfortunately, there is vast disagreement as to how investments should be made and who should shoulder the burden.

The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that the nation's highways and bridges face an \$808.2 billion backlog of spending, including \$479.1 billion in critically needed repairs. More than two-thirds of the nation's roads and nearly 143,000 bridges are classified in "dire need" of repair or upgrades.

While campaigning, President Trump broadly proposed \$1 trillion in federal spending to repair and rebuild roads, highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, railroads, and ports, as well as other vital but less-visible systems involving energy, water, and telecommunications. The proposed spending has many in the transportation and building trades excited.

"If you put a trillion dollars into our infrastructure, you are going to put tens of thousands of people to work," said Ed Wytkind, president of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department in an interview on the Rick Smith Show. "Maybe even millions if you add the multiplier into it."

Trump's broad proposal, however, didn't include specifics on funding and the fear among many is that his pro-business stance will lead to private investment while overlooking public stewardship. That means forgoing some of the protections for workers that are used ubiquitously in large taxpayer funded projects.

The 2016 GOP platform attacked the use of the Fair Labor Standard Act to protect workers, the use of Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) to raise wages and improve working conditions; and proposed to gut the 85-year-old Davis-Bacon Act,

which guarantees "prevailing wage" pay for workers on federal projects.

In early January, a coalition of 12 construction industry and other private sector groups sent a letter to Trump requesting that he rescind President Barack Obama's Executive Order 13502, which encourages federal agencies to require PLAs on large-scale projects.

The groups — including the Associated Builders and Contractors, Associated General Contractors of America, National Association of Home Builders and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, among others — wrote that PLAs force union control of all labor relations, often require nonunion employees to pay into benefit programs on which they might never be able to collect, and do not represent the nearly 87% of the nation's nonunion construction workers.

The anti-union coalition added that repeal of the federal PLA mandate would eliminate the 12%-18% in extra costs that these agreements trigger and would "create a level playing field" for both union and nonunion contractors.

PLAs, also known as a Community Workforce Agreements, are a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement with one or more labor organizations that establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project. PLAs do not exclude bidding on projects by non-union contractors (as ABC and others argue). What they do ensure is that workplace standards are protected and evened out between union and non-union contractors, forcing the non-union contractor to adhere to the same training and hiring standards as its union competitor.

PLAs also help prevent delays, maintain workplace safety, and ensure high quality construction products, all of which help protect taxpayers' investments when public money funds some (or all) of the project.

The attacks on Davis Bacon have yet to begin, but are likely to follow as infrastructure projects take shape.

Trump and his supporters have also called for repeals of regulations that protect worker safety or for starving funding from enforcement agencies so regulations cannot be enforced. Targeted agencies include the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Department of Labor.

"We are going to fix our inner cities and rebuild our highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, schools, hospitals," Trump said in his speech following his win. "We're going to rebuild our infrastructure, which will become, by the way, second to none. And we will put millions of our people to work as we rebuild it."

But the use of regulation, budget-writing, procurement, and other government powers to chip away around the edges of prevailing wages, wage and hour protections, workplace safety, and nondiscrimination should be expected while building these "huge" projects.

"At this point, we don't know what Trump's infrastructure plan will entail," said Rich Kline, president of the Union Label Department. "We can only hope that he doesn't erode worker wages, rights and protections while these projects take shape. We hope that any investments made in building up our infrastructure also build up working families at the same time." ■

## ARE YOU ON OUR E-MAIL LIST?

Have you joined our blast e-mail list? Have you visited us on facebook or twitter? The ULSTD is active on social media, posting union news and product information we believe is important to union members. If you haven't already, find us on facebook, and make sure you sign up for our email list on our website at [unionlabel.org](http://unionlabel.org) to receive important news right in your inbox. ■



# APWU Announces End to Staples Boycott



Supporters rallied in front of Staples headquarters in Framingham, MA.



APWU President Mark Dimondstein speaks to members and supporters at a rally in Washington, DC, calling for the USPS to end its deal with Staples Stores

Protesting in front of the GPO in New York City. Over the course of three-years supporters held rallies across the country

Continued from page 1

In early 2014, the Stop Staples campaign was launched to put pressure on Staples and the USPS. The first country-wide National Day of Action was held on April 24, 2014, when APWU members held 56 Stop Staples protests in 27 states. Shortly after, the union launched its Staples Boycott.

“If Staples was going to take our work and jobs for their private profit, we were going to hit back and affect their bottom line,” Dimondstein explained. The StopStaples.com website was launched and tens of thousands of union members and allies pledged to join the boycott.

In addition to their protests and online campaign, the union began a postcard campaign, delivering more than 100,000 postcards to Staples’ CEO.

With support from the AFL-CIO and international allies, the APWU continued to put constant pressure on both Staples and the USPS. Protestors distributed leaflets and spoke with prospective Staples customers at Staples stores across the country about the boycott.

Then, in February 2015, in response to the proposed merger between Staples and Office Depot, the APWU met with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and released two research papers criticizing the potential \$5.5 billion venture. Eventually the FTC blocked the merger and Staples was forced to pay a \$250 million penalty to Office Depot.

Further investigation by the APWU also found that the mini post office arrangement was short-changing the USPS in revenue, undermining the

security of the mail and trashing the Postal Service’s brand. The union requested a USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation that further proved these facts. The APWU also won a series of cases before the National Labor Relation Board (NLRB) including a recent decision by an Administrative Law Judge ruling that the USPS failed to bargain with the union over the subcontracting of postal work to Staples.

In a statement released by the union, Dimondstein wrote, “with the Staples deal out of the way, there is a fresh opportunity for postal management and the APWU to consider the future expansion and improvement of retail operations without these misguided privatization schemes that undermine great service, good jobs, and a strong postal brand.”

In the same statement from the union, he thanked the “many local and state organizations that joined in the fight.” ■



Protesting in Los Angeles



PERIODICALS  
POSTAGE PAID  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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# EndNotes

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*



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## Facing the Challenge: 2017



The coming year, if not four years, will present many challenges to working people and the unions that represent them. Many of those Americans who desired and voted for major change may suffer voter's remorse when the enormity of that change occurs.

Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, the Veterans Administration, the Departments of Labor,

Energy, and Education and many other established programs and institutions of government face far-reaching alteration.

The new administration and the Republican-dominated Congress have stated their goals, cuts to programs and cuts to taxes for the rich and the corporations. Trickle-down economics rises from the ashes of past failures

Workplace protections and workers' and union rights are sure to be reviewed and "reformed" by those who truly wish to undermine them. Presidential appointees drawn from the ranks of far-right activists, corporations and financial interests may operate on a game plan antagonistic to the interest of most Americans.

Furthermore, an increasingly evident disdain for a free press and vindictive and abusive attacks on critics raise concerns about the sanctity of our basic rights and freedoms. When power is held by those who don't respect Constitutional rights, concern should

rise across the political spectrum.

So, 2017 is likely to be a difficult year and an introduction to a protracted period of legislative and administrative actions that attack basic rights, the social safety net, public education, health-care, the environment and more. These are all milestones of social progress with a Union Label on them, fought for by generations of workers and their unions.

We must hang together as Benjamin Franklin urged his colleagues signing the Declaration of Independence or face the consequences. We must demonstrate solidarity and support the products and the services of union members like ourselves. And we must speak out and defend the rights and advantages enjoyed by working people, union members and non-union workers alike.

This is not the first anti-worker administration in American history, though it may be the first to pose as a friend to working people. We will know them by their deeds and not their words.

And they will know us by our deeds. Activism and solidarity produce results, even in 2017.

A striking example of what can be achieved is the Postal Workers' boycott victory in its dispute the US Postal Service which outsourced jobs to Staples. The APWU won and the USPS is ending its relationship with Staples.

Congratulations to the APWU for an inspiring victory. ■