

Postal protection



**Mack I.
Julion**

This year promises to be a pivotal year for the Postal Service as well as for letter carriers. With all of the attacks on the federal workforce and the potential changes to the Postal Service via a new postmaster general, we must be prepared and united to do all we can to not only protect the service, but also our members. We are in the process of opening collective bargaining, in a year of our national convention, with congressional elections that could definitively decide the trajectory of our teetering democracy.

That is a tall order, but I believe we must highly prioritize the safety of our members while delivering the mail.

We currently have bipartisan legislation pending in Congress, the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 1065/S. 493), which would address most of the issues that have contributed to the rise in attacks on our members. But there is another piece that could also go a long way toward our protection, and that is an increase in the presence and protection by the United States Postal Police officers (PPO).

When I began as a letter carrier, the Postal Police were a normal part of our day. It was not uncommon to see them while we were out on the streets delivering mail. Yet, somewhere along the way, their presence was diminished. Then we were told their purpose was to secure postal buildings and parking lots at night, and their numbers were dramatically cut. I guess they figured that the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) would be enough. Or they were supposed to be enough to act as a deterrent against criminal activity and protect us as they made their rounds like plain clothes detectives. Unfortunately, as we all know, that hasn't worked.

As the president of Chicago Branch 11, I noticed the steady increase in crimes against letter carriers since 2010. After Covid, the numbers were significantly inflated, and it had become just outright dangerous to carry mail in some locations. Of course, I began reaching out to anyone and everyone to keep our members safe. This included the Postal Police union and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL).

I mention them because they have been working in tandem to protect our members as well as to restore the mission and the number of Postal Police on the streets. I frequently communicate with Frank Albergo, the president

of the Postal Police union, to share and receive information about the safety of city letter carriers. Recently he provided me with data that shows the impact of the presence of Postal Police as a deterrent against crimes against letter carriers. This data, compiled by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Postal Service, showed that these crimes are not always random, but rather occur in clusters.

The Postal Police are seeking to increase their numbers and return to the streets to actively protect our members. Sen. Durbin, for his part, had introduced legislation in the last Congress, which would restore the duties of the Postal Police and provide funding to do so. He is expected to soon reintroduce his bill in this Congress. There is currently a House version of the bill, the Postal Police Reform Act of 2025 (H.R. 2095) introduced by Rep. Andrew Garbarino (R-NY). Meanwhile, the USPS has repeatedly made the argument that the Postal Police are only being self-serving in trying to increase its membership. (The OIG has oversight over the PPO.) To which I say, who gives a damn if their objective is self-serving if their presence would make our members safe?

Last year in Chicago we lost Sister Octavia Redmond to violence, and Brother Jay Larson in Rockford. Before them, among others, it was Brother Aundre Cross in Milwaukee while in the performance of his duties. At this point we need to advocate for anything and everything that will keep our members safe. If it means standing shoulder to shoulder with the Postal Police, then let it be a win-win situation for both of us!



Shout-outs

I am so proud of the two young ladies pictured, not solely because they began as letter carriers in Branch 11, but because they have stepped

up and answered the call to represent our members in the branches and regions where they work now. Regina Antwine was recently elected president of Branch 643 in Texas (pictured with her national business agent [NBA], Shawn Boyd). And Aisha Culler (pictured with her NBA, Eddie Davidson, and me) is an arbitration advocate in Region 9 for Branch 233 in South Carolina. Knowing them in Chicago, I thought they would be the most *unlikely* to get this involved in the union, but obviously I was wrong. I am sure there are many more future leaders out there, if they are just asked and given an opportunity!