

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 25, 2020

[WASHINGTON, D.C.]

American Postal Workers Union National President Mark Dimondstein issued the following statement today:

Since the early days of the Postal Service, we postal workers have helped stitch the fabric of the country together. Even in times of crisis – whether natural disaster, conflict, or economic calamity – the Postal Service has always been there, steadily reaching every American home and business in their time of need.

Today is a time of crisis unlike any we've seen in generations. A global pandemic threatens the health of millions and is leading to an economic collapse that could dwarf the Great Recession.

Hundreds of millions of people are sheltered in their homes, avoiding the grocery, pharmacies and other stores as we attempt to slow the spread of the virus. Many workers will soon be without paychecks. Public health officials are desperate to effectively disseminate health-saving information, tests, and drugs.

The United States Postal Service is critical to the country's public health and economic stability in this moment. Postal workers are up to the task. Our network of 157 million daily delivery points, 35,000 post offices and more than 500,000 dedicated public servants is uniquely positioned to serve the country in the weeks and months ahead.

The Postal Service is the only way for millions of people to receive their medications. Last year, we delivered over a billion prescriptions. It's the only way to disseminate stimulus checks and critical public health information and supplies to every household. Vote-by-mail will be essential to holding elections in November. And, in this new era of "social distancing," it's still a time-tested way to connect families and friends no matter where they are.

But if the Postal Service is to meet the challenge of the times, two immediate issues need to be resolved:

First, postal workers must have safe workplaces. Our union is working feverishly to ensure the Postal Service provides for the health and safety of our members and the mailing public. We have already secured important changes to leave, staffing and post office policies. We remain concerned that the distribution of personal protective equipment and sanitizers has been uneven across the country.

Every member from the shop floor to the national office must continue our demand that we have safe workplaces, safe staffing and the necessary equipment and supplies to fulfil our mission.

Second, Congress must act immediately to ensure the financial viability of the Postal Service. We were deeply disappointed that stimulus legislation nearing passage Wednesday does not include vital relief for the Postal Service. The economic fallout of the pandemic calls for measures far beyond the prefunding repeal we've long sought.

House legislation initially sought in excess of \$25 billion in direct relief for the USPS. If Congress does not act soon and on a similar scale, the Postal Service will run out of cash in the coming months. Every member must demand of their representatives that postal relief is included in the next stimulus.

Reports surfaced this week that the White House and Treasury Department oppose cash support for the Postal Service. Their resistance would condemn the country's most trusted and highest-rated federal agency to its demise. It would destroy the one institution capable of reaching every person, hinder the country's public health response, and cripple the \$1.4 trillion mailing and shipping industry.

Our union had planned to spend much of this month commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Great Postal Strike. Those plans have obviously changed. But let us remember one important lesson the 1970 strike proved: the country relies on the hard work of dedicated postal workers, especially in the toughest of times. I believe our current crisis underscores the value of our work and the universal network we uphold.

Finally, let me conclude by recognizing the extraordinary role postal workers have already played in the throes of this crisis. These are unusual times and many of us are understandably anxious – for ourselves, our families, our jobs and our communities. I, like so many others, am heartened by the extraordinary courage of seemingly ordinary workers serving their neighbors in times of need. Together, let's support each other, encourage each other, demand safe workplaces together and continue to serve each other in these extraordinary times.