

Postal Newsletter

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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Never assume anything!

By Tony Carobine, President

There is a story about a doctor whose telephone rang one night awakening him from fitful slumber. It was one of his regular patients, a young man in a wild state of alarm. "My wife, doctor!" he shouted. It's her appendix. "You'd better come around quick!"

The doctor sighed and told the young man to go back to bed. "Give her some bicarbonate or ginger ale, and I'll look in tomorrow," he said. "She doesn't have appendicitis."

The husband became even wilder, insisting that she did too have appendicitis. "Well she can't have appendicitis!" the doctor shouted. "I took her appendix out three years ago, and I never heard of anyone having two appendixes."

"Ever hear of anybody having two wives?" the young man asked bitterly.

The doctor went right away and it was a good thing he did, because the second wife did have appendicitis.

This story teaches us an important lesson about why we should never assume anything. This is especially true in regard to the upcoming November election for president, members of Congress, state and local officials. Because you are a union activist, you are more likely to be knowledgeable about the candidates running for these offices; which candidates will support postal worker and working family issues as opposed to those who will not.

As actively involved union representatives, we shouldn't assume members are

registered voters or are familiar with the candidates and where they stand on serving their best interests, especially with the number of other matters that members must attend to in their personal and work

postal workers and preservation of the U.S. Postal Service. These activities require a collective effort.

As a result of all this, we must make it a priority to focus on the upcoming election. And, to be effective this must be a continuous effort. Studies have revealed that in order for a message to become memorable and effective, it must be repeated many times. (For more information and suggestions for communicating about the election, please read the booklet: *Federal Elections, Union Publications and the Internet* posted in the Member Resources section of the PPA website.)



lives. Therefore, in the time leading up to November 3 we must make it a priority to tell them about the consequences of the upcoming election, how to become a registered voter, which candidates will stand with postal workers, retirees, and their families and encourage them to vote.

A look into the history of the labor movement reveals that most victories came

The union's strength and vigor depends on the commitment and loyalty of members. An educated and active membership is the necessary foundation for success in everything the union does. As the late labor leader Eugene Debs said: "*What can labor do for itself? The answer is not difficult. Labor can organize, it can unify, it can consolidate its forces. This done, it can demand and command!*"

We should never assume anything. We should never assume that members are already registered to vote. We should never as-

"...in the time leading up to November 3 we must make it a priority to tell them about the consequences of the upcoming election, how to become a registered voter, which candidates will stand with postal workers, retirees, and their families and encourage them to vote."

sume they are aware of the importance of this election. We should never assume they are familiar with the candidates. We should never assume they are motivated to vote. We should never assume anything!

about because of rank and file participation. While we can single-handedly represent members in the grievance procedure, we cannot do so when it comes to other matters of importance; such as privatization schemes, legislative initiatives and electing individuals to public office who support

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Let us hear from you

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

One of my duties as secretary-treasurer includes the collection of dues which are based on a calendar year. Dues for the editor are \$30.00 and \$20.00 for website editors, associate editors and associate members. As a means to assist with dues payments, the PPA constitution and the membership application spell out the various membership categories and the eligibility requirements for each category.

Dues collection for the coming year begins with the mailing of dues notices in October. For those late in paying their dues, additional notices and reminders are sent. After that, there is follow up with personal phone calls or emails.

I sometimes find out the dues notice went to a post office box and were never received by the editor to whom it was addressed. Sometimes the notice is picked up, laid on a desk and then it stays there or is thrown away. On other occasions the editor receives the notice and it never gets to the treasurer or just doesn't get paid. The editor, assuming his or her dues are paid then calls to ask what happened to their press card.

Or, I may find out the local no longer

has a publication or locals have merged also causing the merger of publications. When such circumstances occur, it would be helpful to be advised about the loss of a newsletter or a change of editor.

"We all serve the APWU by staying informed. After all, that's our job...communication. So let us hear from you!"

Therefore, please let me know of any such changes or make it a point to be sure your dues are paid each year. How? In the case of dues payment, if you don't receive a confirmation letter or press card shortly after you believe your dues are paid, simply contact me for verification. It only takes a letter (PO Box 451, Saint Charles MO 63302), telephone call (636-947-6106), or email (ebrennanapwu@aol.com).

So, if you haven't yet received a confirmation letter or press card for 2020 it means your PPA dues are not paid for the current year.

We all serve the APWU by staying informed. After all, that's our job...communication. So let us hear from you!

Editors: plan now for 2021 awards program

Editors should plan now for entering the 2021 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for potential material to enter from their publications in next year's event.

In 2019, first place and honorable mention awards were presented in 14 categories including: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photograph, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and website.

Although the program has yet to be developed for the 2021 awards, it is expected that the award categories will be relatively the same as 2021.

Originally called the Biennial Award of Merit Program, it was established at the August 1967 conference in Cleveland, Ohio. The purpose of instituting an awards program was to recognize Association editors for outstanding work in editing, publishing and writing. The first awards were presented at the 1968 conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Over the years, the awards program has been modified several times to reflect changes in technology and production methods.

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be provided to editors early next year.



Gloom and doom should not be only focus

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

We all know that the news for the Postal Service is not good. Guess what? I wrote that in an article for this publication in 2010. We are still here and the news is still not good! As it was in 2010, we still cannot predict the future outcome for the USPS. While I feel we need to inform our members, I still think bad news does not have to be the entire focus of our papers.

People get tired of reading and hearing about gloom and doom, especially now with everything else that is going on; Coronavirus and racial discord heading up the list. Yes we need to address these because they are so important but we also need to keep things in balance. There are good things out there to tell. You may have to do a little digging for

the good but your readers will appreciate it. They will be more likely to read the “happy” sections first I am betting.

In the *Black Swamp Outrider* I get the most comments about the “Around Our Local” column. The column is about our members and their lives – weddings, anniversaries, births, retirements and yes I include a sympathy section for those who have lost loved ones. People want to know they matter!

In the *Ohio Postal Worker* I have a “Household Hints” column. People love that column! I get comments on it all the time. I read lots of magazines and check the internet for interesting and helpful hints. Another thing to try is favorite recipes. Not a whole issue of them but one or two every so often.

If the local has a grievance win of importance make sure you let the members know. They need to know we are fighting management every step of the way and winning!

Anything your local does that gives back to the members should be put in the paper. Having a picnic, a party, giving out T-shirts or tickets for an event, walking for charity – publish it. Do you provide legal services, the Accident Benefit Association, or insurance of some type? Get it in the paper so the members are aware of what’s going on in their local. They should know that we offer more than just grievance service!

Last but not least, take the opportunity to thank your members for being members! They make a choice to join and to pay their dues, and we need to thank them for that!

PPA Federal Election Booklet

Election Day Preparations

By Diane North, Editor-at-Large

Did you know there is a difference between the APWU community and the outside community? Did you know reprinting campaign material received from a candidate for federal office is prohibited? And did you know you cannot endorse or oppose a candidate with the outside community? Wow, so many rules and regulations could just boggle one’s mind.

No need to feel boggled. At www.apwupostalpress.org you can read on line or download the PPA booklet *Federal Elections, Union Publications and The Internet*. I strongly suggest you do that before printing any information pertaining to federal elections and candidates. We need to keep it all legal and stay on top of the laws.

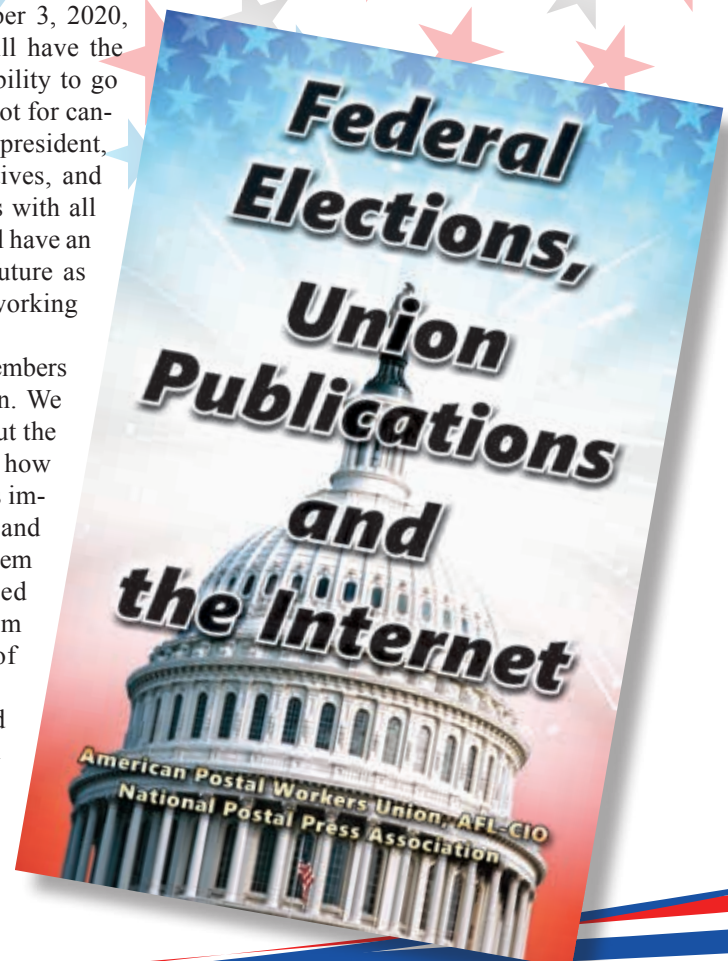
However, the hint here is there are no rules to suggesting that people go out and vote. We need to print a strong message in all our newsletters, on Facebook, Twitter, in websites or any form provided that everyone eligible GO OUT AND VOTE. (And register to vote if eligible.)

This is a reprint from the booklet *Federal Elections, Union Publications and the Internet*, that I find very important:

“On Tuesday, November 3, 2020, voting-age Americans will have the opportunity and responsibility to go to the polls and cast a ballot for candidates of their choice for president, congressional representatives, and state and local offices. As with all elections, the outcome will have an impact not only on our future as postal workers but on all working Americans.

We must prepare our members for this important election. We need to educate them about the issues, advise them about how candidates stand on issues important to postal workers and all working families, tell them how to become registered voters, and remind them about the significance of voting on Election Day.

This is quite an involved task, but nonetheless a vital one. How can union representatives make a difference? The answer is communication and it must be a continuous effort.”



Is there a cure for amnesia?

By Hank Greenberg,
PPA Honorary Member

Amnesia affects millions of people. You might be surprised to learn that more people **under the age** of 'senior citizens' suffer from amnesia. There is a proven cure for

time). But, some very greedy companies convinced Congress there was a 'better way'. They **deregulated** the airlines and today you have competition based only on the price of a ticket.

What do you have now? You have airlines that outsource maintenance to the cheapest company, including foreign companies and you have 'additional charges' for everything you can imagine. (Is the seat a tight squeeze? Checked a bag lately? No airline comes to your city anymore?)

It's true, most of the airlines went out of business and you now have fewer airlines competing. You no longer have anything that resembles "service" and reasonable expenses related to flying is now just a memory.

How about the phone company? If you research the history of the phone system in the United States you will find that our system was rated number one worldwide. That's right, number one.

Today, thanks to government deregulation we have dozens of companies competing for your business. The cost of manufacturing so many different phones and the enormous cost of advertising has done nothing more than drive up the cost and confuse the consumer as to which service is really the best service. It might be hard for some of you to believe that before deregulation there was "no charge" for a service call from the phone company.

So now we talk about something near and dear to our hearts, the U.S. Postal Service;

the best postal service in the world. The most dedicated employees and the only service rated **number one** of any federal agency, year after year.

Get ready; "privateers" have other plans for the Postal Service.

Wait a minute; you said there's a cure for amnesia. **There is! It's you the editor, the communicators** of local and state APWU publications. You are in the best position to help "cure" our members of am-

"It's your articles and editorials that can motivate the membership."

nesia by keeping them INFORMED of what private companies have done in the past and what they are planning for **your future.**

It's **your articles and editorials that can motivate the membership.** It's your articles and editorials that keep the membership informed. Members may not realize that the future of the Postal Service and the members' jobs are in jeopardy.

Believe me; **you can make a big difference** in what the future holds for the Postal Service and your jobs.

Posting publications on PPA website

In addition to the practice of exchanging publications among PPA members, a section is available on the PPA website for the posting of publications. The Member Publications section is reserved for PPA members who submit copies of their newsletters for posting in this section of the website located under Member Resources.

By submitting a newsletter for posting, the editor is granting permission to fellow editors to reprint any article that originates in the paper as long as credit is given to the original source.

To submit a publication for posting, e-mail it as a pdf to ppa@apwupostalpress.org. A publication will be posted for 30 days.



this condition. But first, a few examples of amnesia...

Did you know that the American airline system was once rated the **best** in the world? It's true. When airlines in America were regulated by a federal agency, they competed on "service" and pricing was based on the cost of the service provided. (Service is a word you may not have heard in a long

Exchange of member publications

Over the years, one of the most popular services facilitated by the PPA is exchanging copies of publications between members of the PPA. An example of the benefits of this practice is that it's not only a great way to find out what is going on in other areas of the country, but time and again members have reported that because of what they've read in an exchange publication they were able to favorably resolve a contract administration issue. Exchanging copies also provides editors with resource material that can be used as reprints (with proper credit) plus ideas for producing their own publication.

For those not currently mailing a copy of their publication to fellow PPA members, please consider doing so. The additional cost for copies and postage is minimal with the value of exchanging this information far outweighing the cost. A union publication is a valuable resource – please share it widely!

To help with this practice, the PPA Membership/Mailing List is posted in the Member Resources section of the PPA website. If preferred the list is available in Excel format (which would work better for mailing label setup) upon request by calling the PPA at 906-774-9599 or by sending an email to ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

Why bother to interview people?

What's the best way to keep your paper or newsletter from looking like the diary of a small clique? Invite readers to join in, so the paper becomes an exciting forum where they meet all kinds of people.

Printing letters to the editor and being on the lookout for new people to write articles will help. But what about the many readers who just won't sit down to write an article or letter?

Get in the habit of interviewing everyone, from the member too shy to write to the stranger

with interesting know-how to share. Interviews give readers a fresh perspective, plus they show your group's interested in what the average person has to say.

For example, if management makes a decision detrimental to the membership, quote in the paper exactly what was said. Then readers will realize what you're up against and will get upset at the source of the problem, not the union.

Every time you print someone's words, you provide readers with a new personality – whether it's a good guy they identify with or a bad guy who makes them angry.

Who can you interview?

The average person is the best.

It's impossible to exaggerate the value of personal experiences. More than any-



thing else, they make readers feel that your paper or newsletter is theirs, too.

Use personal interviews as a regular source of information. Interview a witness to an event, or someone familiar with a job or whatever situation you're looking at.

Whether you're covering an informational picket or a meeting, show readers what it's all about by asking people why they're there, and what they think of it. Instead of only reporting that a rally took place, talk to a member attending for the first time, or collar several participants.

After all, who doesn't want to hear from others instead of just the officers? Read-

ers will be more impressed when fellow members speak in favor of your union's actions. And the mystery of not knowing who might appear in the paper next will lure people into reading each issue.

For example, suppose you win a big grievance and a member gets a bundle of back pay. Interview the member. If the member is excited about the victory, a quote will make the story exciting. This member's experience gives living proof that the union is worthwhile, that it helps someone readers can identify with.

Also, you can be sure that once members are featured in the paper, they and their friends will read the paper with more trust and interest.

At first you might feel funny interviewing people; they might feel uptight too. But rest assured that once the article is done, people love to see themselves taken seriously in print.

PPA Biennial Conference planned for August 2021

Depending on the COVID-19 pandemic, plans are for Altoona, Iowa to be the site of the 2021 Biennial Conference of the APWU National Postal Press Association on Thursday, August 5 through Saturday, August 7, 2021 with a pre-conference session on Wednesday, August 4. The conference will be held at the Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows Hotel, Racetrack & Casino.

A guestroom rate of \$132.00 per day single or double occupancy will be in effect throughout the conference. 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.



Consider these suggestions 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** a 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.

Who needs a union publication?

Your members do!

Members who know what's going on – where they fit in and what they can do – are likely to be more active, and more committed. That kind of membership is what every union needs. So if the union is going to function effectively, all members need to be informed.

In fact, making sure that members know about the union's programs, achievements, goals and people is one of the most important jobs of every local union leader.

For instance, one place a member learns about the union is at the regular membership meeting. But it's a fact of life – not all members can go to regular meetings every time. Some who might be interested can't attend at all.

In some places, unfortunately not many do. There are schedule conflicts, family obligations, distances to travel. Sometimes people just don't know when or where meetings are being held. Others, not knowing much about the union, feel excluded.

Whatever the reason, many of those members who don't make it to the meetings are (or could be) interested. They want to know what the union is doing. It is their right to know.

How are members learning about their union? Some locals post the minutes of the meeting on a bulletin board, along with countless other announcements and notices. How many people read them?

Of course there is always word of mouth. However, the story can change from one person to the next. Most often it does. Details get lost; facts become confused.

There is the national union publication that each member receives. But its focus necessarily is different from what your local might have; after all, that publication is designed to inform all members of the union. Events of concern to all appear in those pages – but day-to-day issues of your local union cannot.

Electronic forms of communication such as websites, Facebook, email and Twitter are also available. Good methods of communication to be sure that should be used, but not all members are tuned into electronic communication and it does lack being a tangible presence by physically arriving in the homes of our members and their families.

This means that the local union publication is still the most important vehicle for communicating the union's message.

It's the local publication that fills the com-

munications gap. Here's what a newsletter can and will do:

- **Makes union news easily accessible** – only the effort of reading it is necessary.
- **Informs** – it tells members what the local has done to protect them; what the officers who represent them are doing; what activities are being planned and what other members are interested in.
- **Sets the record straight** – written by and about union members, its point of view is that of the members themselves. It directly answers the question, "How does this event affect me?" It can address rumors started by management to divide members by presenting the workers' (and the union's) side of the story.
- **Promotes identification with the union** – it draws people together, reinforcing each member's feeling of belonging. The paper can help to define the local union as an ongoing presence in members' minds.
- **Educates** – what better way to explain how the union represents the membership on the workroom floor. Using real situations, it teaches in a way that a dictionary or academic textbook cannot.
- **Motivates** – when people know something about an organization like the local union, when they know more about other members and officers, they are more likely to want to participate. Knowing about an issue or an event is the first step towards saying, "I want to be part of this."
- **Involves** – everyone has some talent. Members are all creative and knowledgeable in their own individual ways. Most people, given the opportunity, like to share what they know with others. The union publication tells people about those opportunities.
- **Gives recognition** – it reinforces that motivation to join in by letting other members know about what you, or he, or she did for the local. And it's hard to resist seeing your own name in print.
- **Reaches beyond the local union membership** – while it's building union pride, that newsletter can be reinforcing the benefits of belonging to current members and serve as an organizing tool for nonmembers.

Your local's goal should be to establish open, direct communication with all of the members. A local union paper is a valuable key to that communication.



Editor's toolbox: Tips for APWU communicators

Libel vs. slander

These words are often confused. Both apply to damaging another person's character or reputation. In general, libel is written or published defamation, while slander is spoken. Note: Avoid confusing libel with liable, which means "likely" or "at risk of."

Quote mark etiquette

Quotation marks should be used honestly and sparingly, when there is a genuine quotation at hand, and it is necessary to be very rigorous about the words enclosed by the marks.

If part of it must be left out because of space limitations, it is good manners to insert three dots to indicate the omission, but it is unethical to do this if it means connecting two thoughts which the original author did not intend to have tied together. Above all, quotation marks should not be used for ideas that you'd like to disown.

How to write a successful lead sentence to your next news story

The trick to good lead writing is to focus immediately on the most newsworthy point of the story and to reserve other details until later in the story. Try to reduce the essence of the news to a single sentence or even a single word.

Use this simple device. Pretend you are calling a friend to report the news. You might start: "Do you know what happened?" "No, what happened?" Your answer to that question is your lead.

Language usage made easy

Here's a list of some frequently misused words. Use this cheat sheet as quick reference to the appropriate spelling or term.

- **Fewer or less.** This is a matter of numbers. If you are able to count the number of things or people use *fewer*. If you are unable to count a portion or quantity, use *less*.

Example: With *fewer* people attending the meeting we will need *less* time.

- **Affect or effect.** *Affect* is a verb meaning "influence." *Effect* can be either a verb

meaning "to bring about" or a noun meaning "the result." *Examples:* The cold weather *affects* our heating bill. The company will *effect* some new attendance policies. What *effect* will the new laws have on compliance?

- **It's or Its.** *It's* is a contraction of the words *it is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun denoting ownership. *Examples:* *It's* extremely difficult to attribute the statement to *its* original source.



- **Me, myself or I.** Use *me* as the object of a verb or preposition. Use *myself* interchangeably with the word *personally*. Use *I* as the subject of a verb. *Example:* Call Fred Smith or *me* with your answer. *I* will handle the job *myself*. Fred Smith and *I* will pass along the results of the survey.

Ways to polish your writing skills

Even if you don't think of yourself as a professional writer, your writing reflects your professionalism. If your writing is sloppy and disorganized, you will be perceived as sloppy and disorganized. So, how can you hone your writing skills? *Use the following pointers:*

- **Use your own words.** Don't puff up your writing with pompous language. If you wouldn't say something in normal conversation, avoid it in your writing.

- **Let it sit.** If you have time, set your writing aside for several days. You will be surprised what time will tell you. Good writing rings true; weak wording wilts over time.

- **Ask a friend** to read your work. Even when you proofread your own writing, you can miss something.

- **Develop a thick skin.** You have to learn to accept criticism without taking it personally. Every writer has to endure some red ink. The more you embrace criticism, the more you will learn.

- **Read, read, read.** Finally, you can improve your writing immensely by reading. By exposing yourself to the written word, you subconsciously develop a better ear for language.

Proofreading tips

Don't let your documents or emails go out riddled with errors. Grammatical mistakes can be particularly difficult to catch because spell-checkers often don't flag them. That's why proofreading is still the best antidote.

Here are two tips for checking your work:

- **View your document** at 125% or 150%. You can better see what you're reading and more easily spot errors.

- **Switch your font to Courier**, a mono-spaced font. That makes it easier to catch mistakes, because it forces you to pay closer attention to the text.

Organization's past helps point the way to its future

Most organizations have a rich history from which you can draw ideas to help define new goals and strength. The history will point to values on which an organization was built and how those same values can apply to the future.

Who can you rely upon to obtain such information? In every organization there are a few people who've been around for long enough to tell you how things used to be. If you draw out their stories, they'll open your eyes as to how the organization has progressed and came to embrace certain beliefs. Such stories reveal a past that can strengthen the organization today.

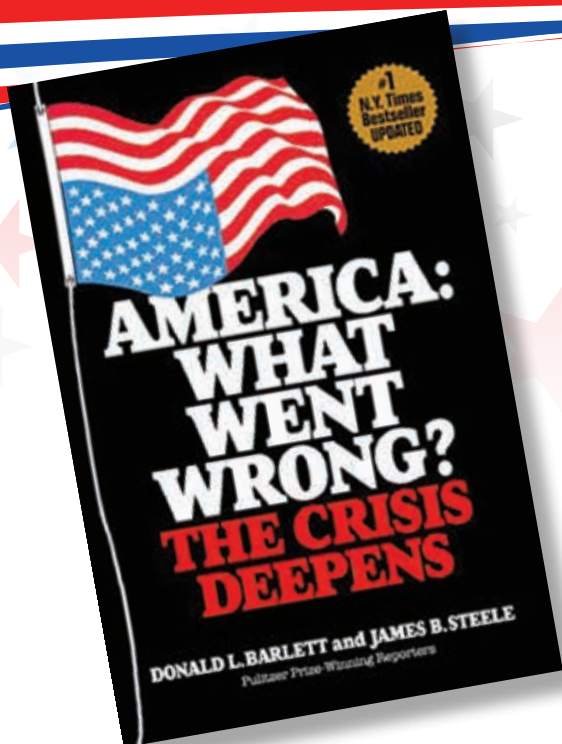
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New Book

America: What Went Wrong? The Crisis Deepens

searched and enriched with interviews, this new book vividly reveals how decades of tax policy, deregulation and economic measures have created soaring income inequality and fewer opportunities for most Americans. Barlett and Steele document how Congresses and presidents of both parties repeatedly choose to favor the few at the expense of the many, creating a transfer of wealth of colossal proportions. Now, new policies are launching a fresh assault on the middle class.

Barlett and Steele show this need not be: there are solutions, but they require us to change our thinking and recognize that

our reliance on the private market to uplift all Americans and solve all our problems has failed, as we've seen most recently during the coronavirus pandemic. To make the American dream a reality for all Americans, government must play a more active role – to reassert itself on behalf of all the people by creating regulatory oversight that balances public safety with business interests, enacting more equitable tax policies and implementing programs that assure all Americans of basic health care and a decent retirement.

Middle-class Americans know their way of life is under attack. This book explains how it happened and how we can make it right.

Long before Covid-19 ravaged the economy, millions of middle-class Americans were struggling with another crisis – stagnant earnings, unaffordable health care and the prospect of an impoverished retirement.

This is no accident: in this updated and expanded edition of their *New York Times* #1 bestseller, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporters Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele explain with human stories and authoritative statistical findings how specific actions by Washington and Wall Street are systematically dismantling the middle class.

Sweeping in scope, meticulously re-

Back page: shining star or afterthought?

Be honest: Do you plan the last page of your publication, or do you let it happen? Many editors concentrate on page one, do wonders with their second first page (usually page three), put effort into a center spread, and then dump their jumps and left-overs onto the back page of the newsletter. What a waste!

Just think about how you handle any newsletter or brochure. Chances are you read page

one, glance through the rest of the publication, then refold it and put it away, back page up. And that's what the eye catches whenever you subsequently glance at the publication. So why not make your final page worthy of catching and holding the eye?

The point is this: because your back page is not hidden from sight, you should take a little time to make it spectacular and definitely read.