

Postal Newsletters

Press

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION

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We are the beneficiaries of their efforts

By Tony Carobine, President

As an individual who has an interest in labor history, a tragic event that took place during the 1913 holiday season always comes to mind during this time of year. What was this event? First, some background.

Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula (near where I live) juts into Lake Superior at the northern most reaches of Upper Michigan and was once the site of the world's richest copper lode. In July 1913, fifteen-thousand copper miners simultaneously struck all the mines in the Keweenaw Peninsula.

At the time of the strike, mining was extremely hazardous for the people working underground and only profitable for the powerful mining companies. One person died a week on average, and 11 were seriously injured. For that, they earned less than \$3 for a twelve-hour shift (\$78.91 in 2020 dollars). There was no such thing as workers' compensation or death benefits. In fact, when a miner was killed or could no longer work, his family was given 15 days to move or be evicted from the mining company owned housing.

The issues voiced by the miners at the outset of the strike were focused on their immediate needs: A shorter work day, a \$3 minimum wage, abolition of the feared one-man drill called the "widow-maker," a formal grievance procedure and recognition of their union.

The mining companies were far more than simply employers of miners. They owned or controlled nearly everything: Land, housing, water supply, schools, hospitals, English language newspapers, and the local government.

As an example of the mine owner's greed and low regard for the workers, instead of using mules to haul the loaded cars of ore out of the mine, which cost money to buy, house and then feed, two workers would

push the cars weighing between 1,200 – 3,000 pounds loaded with one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half tons of rock. After just a few years these workers would break down but that was acceptable since they could be easily replaced for less than the cost of maintaining a mule.

Anna Clemenc, known as "Big Annie" because of her six-foot frame and described as a "tall straight-backed woman beaming confidence," was one of the most visible

receive their presents from Santa Claus. Some started to leave but the room was still rather full with hundreds of people, mainly children. At approximately 4:40 p.m. a man (later believed to be a strikebreaker hired by the mining companies) entered the hall, loudly yelled out, "Fire!" and quickly left the building.

As a result, panic ensued with many children and adults rushing to the stairway to exit. The stairway became jammed when

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and fiery leaders of the 1913 strike, many times facing down police, National Guard troops and angry mine managers. The wife and daughter of copper miners, she was arrested repeatedly, jailed and even convicted of various strike-related crimes, only to return to the front of the daily parades leading thousands of strikers and their supporters carrying a huge American flag.

As a way to bring holiday cheer to the children of striking miners, Big Annie and other women of the Calumet Women's Local of the Western Federation of Miners organized a Christmas Eve party on December 24, 1913 as they were concerned the children would be without Christmas presents or candy due to the strike. Annie was able to raise money from local merchants and others to buy gifts and candy and women of the local made clothing and mittens.

The location of the party was the second floor meeting room of the Italian Hall in the city of Calumet. At around 4:30 in the afternoon the happy children had begun to

someone tripped and fell. Unable to breathe because of the mass of compressed bodies, 73 people, mostly children died from suffocation. The culprit who gave the false alarm was never found.

As the anniversary of this tragedy approaches, please take a moment to remember those who not only died in that hall 107 years ago; but all who have perished for the cause of labor over the years.

Upon reflection of this and other events in labor history, one cannot help but feel a great deal of sadness but also admiration and respect for the tens of thousands of labor activists that came before us. They didn't stand idly by. They stood up and fought for a better life for themselves and for workers everywhere. There were tragedies, losses and disappointments along the way but they never gave up. We are the beneficiaries of their efforts.

May we honor their memory by working to build a stronger, more active union and labor movement in the coming year!

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This publication is 100% union printer produced: Union typeset, Union layout, Union printed.

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Be thankful

By Jenny Gust, Editor-at-Large

We are coming into that time of year when everyone is in a big rush. Hurry, hurry – make lists of things to do – bake, cook, shop, decorate. Hurry, hurry! All of this is in addition to our regular lives, yikes – where can I get some more time!

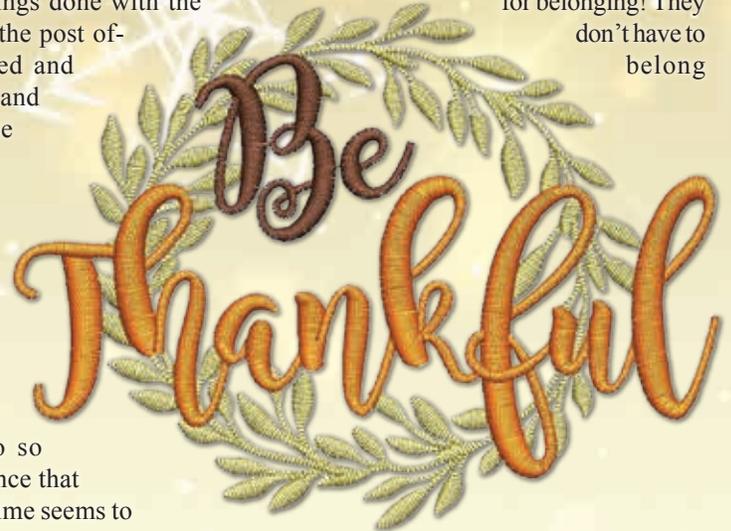
Time is a funny thing. When I worked, I made sure to get things done with the time I had outside of the post office. Now I am retired and have way more time and I sometimes can't see that I am getting anything more done! What happened? When I talk to other retirees they say the same thing – how the heck did we get it all done when we were working?

Time seems to go so fast now. But I read once that when you are young, time seems to go slower because your experiences are all new and different for a long time. As you get older you no longer have as many new experiences and sometimes it seems like the same old thing all the time.

So how does this apply to you and your newsletter? Instead of the same old, same old – maybe it's time to spice it up. Make it your goal to change something one month and then something else the next. Use more photos, cartoons or a joke or two to liven things up. Work on interesting headlines for each article. Use subheads, bullet points, or box items of

interest. Put some holiday artwork in each issue. We are always celebrating something or honoring something. Don't let people think this issue is the same as the last issue! Hey – this is new, different – look at me – read me!

As for the title of this article – Be thankful. Take the time to thank your members for belonging! They don't have to belong



– it's their choice. So thank them – let them know you appreciate the fact they have chosen to pay their share and be part of our union family. Remind them that being part of our union is a good thing!

Finally, I want to thank all of you for doing what you do. Union work can be a thankless task at times. I truly enjoy reading your newsletters, meeting you at the conferences, and being part of the PPA and our union. Ok having said all that I have to go. . . I've got baking, cooking, shopping, decorating and oh yea, I've got a paper to get out!

Reminder:

Posting of member publications

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.

Informing the uninformed

By Edward J. Brennan,
Secretary-Treasurer

How many times have you come across a person who is unquestionably uninformed regarding a particular subject? Have you ever tried to straighten them out? All of us have probably heard at one time or another about an irresponsible decision (in our way of thinking) that someone has made simply because they are not knowledgeable. Regarding our experiences as union representatives, how many of us have come across a member who is in the dark when it comes to the contract or issues on the workroom floor? Contrary to what some people may believe, we can fix this “knowledge gap” by the dissemination of information through a readily available tool – COMMUNICATION.

In reality such problems are actually allowed to exist because we, as union leaders, have mixed up priorities. Some of us even think that, because we have union meetings all of our members should be informed about everything. But this is not the case. Many people belong to organizations but for various reasons do not attend meetings. Many belong because they believe in the organization’s activities and programs. Many belong to gain protections and benefits. But all cannot or will not participate in meetings. That is why, we as leaders must provide information to our members whenever possible. We should have a well-informed membership. In our case as APWU representatives, the best source of information is the written word. (The COVID pandemic is making the necessity to communicate through the written word even more important and necessary.)

All locals should include in their budgets funds for publishing a newsletter on a regular basis to keep members current about issues affecting them. A well-informed membership is a strong membership and an asset to our union. Whenever it comes to our leadership and our membership, communication and knowledge can totally wipe out any use of the term “uninformed.”

As union leaders and members we

should focus our priorities on fostering a strong and informed membership. Wherever possible we should have a local publica-

tion to accomplish this goal or start a publication if we don’t have one. (We should also use social media as well.) The answer to the problem of informing the uninformed has always existed. The answer is communication of knowledge through the written word. All we have to do is set our priorities straight and communicate with our members. Bring out the best in our membership by giving them the knowledge they need to exist in our ever-changing postal life. Make our members the most informed in the world. Help them to be proud members of the American Postal Workers Union!

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postal life. Make our members the most informed in the world. Help them to be proud members of the American Postal Workers Union!

Capturing reader interest

To come up with techniques to stimulate readership, think about what catches your eye in publications you read at home. Also, stop off at a newsstand and take a look at the techniques that magazines and newspapers use to capture interest. Focus group feedback indicates that participants are most likely to read:

- Human-interest and day-in-the-life stories about other people
- Sidebars with quick facts
- Short articles with bullet points
- Question and answer columns
- Cartoons
- Letters to the editor.

Remember also that strong headlines are critical to engaging interest. A good headline captures the point of the story in a small space, and is catchy enough to make you want to read more. Use dynamic adjectives and verbs to attract attention, and drop conjunctions and articles when not needed for clarity. And once you have a strong headline, make sure that your lead paragraph continues the job of getting the reader to pursue the story further.

Within the body of your stories, be as concise as possible and use a range of writing styles to engage interest, including:

- News style articles that report facts and quote sources
- Feature style articles that tell stories about people

- Interviews written in a question and answer format
- Repeating columns that always appear on the same page.

2021 dues notice sent

A dues notice letter and membership application for 2019 was mailed to PPA members on October 26. Occasionally, we find that dues notices are laid aside which then requires additional notices or phone calls as reminders. Your help in making sure your dues for the coming year are paid in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Upon receipt of your dues, a 2019 PPA Membership/Press Identification Card will be prepared and sent to you provided your digital photo is already on file with the PPA. If your digital photo is not on file (or you would like to submit an updated photo), please email the photo to ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

Thank you for your membership in the PPA!

Editors: plan now for 2021 PPA Awards Program

Editors should plan now on entering the 2021 PPA Awards Program by being on the lookout for material to enter from their newsletters published since June 2019. The 2021 program will be developed soon, after which editors will be notified of the timeframe to submit entries. The award categories are expected to be the same as in 2019.

First place and honorable mention awards in the following categories were included in the 2019 program: editorial, news story, feature story, headline, cartoon, photo, community service, creative writing, non-postal labor story, new editor, three overall excellence and website awards.

To assist with selecting material to enter, following are guidelines used as part of the judging process.

BEST EDITORIAL:

1. Does the editorial present the case through effective argument?
2. Is the editorial clearly understood?
3. Is there a clear indication of honesty and sincerity?
4. Is there a balance in the presentation?
5. Is the editorial constructive; does it offer an alternative?

Note: An editorial is an article of comment or opinion.

BEST NEWS STORY:

1. Does the news story clearly report an event or events of a timely or current nature?
2. Does the headline capture your attention and accurately reflect the story?
3. Does the lead sentence accurately reflect the subject of the story?
4. Does the writer cover the subject without editorializing?
5. Does the news story hold your attention and interest?
6. Are the 5 W's covered?
7. Is the information accurate?

Note: A news story tells news and includes who, what, where, when, why and how. It is written in the "third person"—therefore, the word "I" is not used. There is no editorializing in the article, although the article might have a clear "point of view." Any opinions are included in quotes, with the person having said those words getting credit for having said them.

BEST FEATURE STORY:

1. Is the feature story an original story?

2. Does the feature story cover the subject in depth?

3. Is the headline effective and attention-getting and accurately reflect the story?

4. Is the story written without editorializing?

Note: A feature story is an in-depth article exploring background issues, personalities or activities of individuals, emphasizing the human or entertaining aspects of a situation.

BEST HEADLINE:

1. Does the headline capture your attention?
2. Does the headline show originality?
3. Does the headline accurately reflect the content of the article?

Note: Judge only the headline, not the article.

BEST CARTOON:

1. Does the cartoon display originality?
2. Does the cartoon capture your attention?
3. Is the cartoon effective in conveying a message?

BEST PHOTO:

1. Does the photo display originality?
2. Does the photo capture your attention?
3. How is the quality of the photo?
4. Has the photo been adequately cropped, if necessary?
5. Is the photo effective in conveying a message?

BEST COMMUNITY SERVICE:

1. Does the story adequately describe the member(s) or organization's contribution to the community?
2. Does the story cover the subject in depth?
3. Does the story hold your attention and interest?

BEST CREATIVE WRITING:

1. This category covers fiction, poetry, humor or any form of serious writing with a distinctively creative touch.
2. Does it have meaning? Is there a point or is it rambling words and letters?
3. Does it have relevance to postal or union life or related issues?

BEST NON-POSTAL LABOR STORY:

This category includes stories about non-postal labor union activity or non-postal labor-oriented topics. (The story need not be a first-hand account.)

1. Is the subject of significance?

2. Is the article clearly written?

3. Is it clear why postal workers should be interested in the story?

HANK GREENBERG AWARD

FOR BEST NEW EDITOR:

(Two Different Issues)

Besides the physical makeup and content, this award recognizes a new editor striving to produce a union publication that exemplifies dedication, sincerity and professionalism.

Named in honor of past PPA President Hank Greenberg, this award signifies the type of spirit, determination and leadership that Brother Greenberg displayed as president for over 17 years.

BEST WEBSITE:

1. Look for appealing design.
2. Quality of content and appropriateness of subject matter.
3. Ease of navigation.

OVERALL EXCELLENCE:

(Single Issue)

Best Professional and Non-Professional.

1. Look for planning, layout and overall design.
2. Adequate use of photos and/or graphics.
3. Quality of reproduction.
4. Good use of headlines.
5. Quality of proofreading.
6. Balance of content and appropriateness of subject matter.



Entries required

Consideration for awards is only given to the entries submitted to the Awards Committee. Publications that do not submit entries are not considered.

Dues must be paid

In accordance with the PPA Constitution, current editor members must pay their 2021 dues by February 1, 2021 in order to be eligible to participate in the Awards Program, while new editors have until May 1.

Awards Program material

Awards Program rules and entry forms will be made available upon completion of the Award Committee's work on the program.

Content development: what's news?

Ask any person "what's new," and the reply will be about something timely, important, useful, or of some consequence. Or it may simply be about something that is interesting. It will often contain elements of conflict, competition, or accomplishment. Something happened . . . or didn't happen. The main character may be somebody important and well known . . . or a stranger. And so on.

Although "news" is hard to define, we all know it when we hear or read it. News is what makes a newsletter interesting, informative, and worthwhile.

To determine what's news for your newsletter, ask:

- Is this news to me as an editor?
- As a member of this organization?

If something is news to you, chances are it will be news to your readers, too.

It seems obvious that readers want to know something if it will affect them personally. Sometimes only you may know it is something they need to know. But you always have to make them *want* to know.

To do this, you have to grab the reader's attention in the headline and the very first sentence. Learning to write like newspaper journalists is imperative for the volunteer editor.

Writing in a traditional newspaper style can be a real boon to a volunteer editor. It is easy to read, easy to cut, and easy to write, once you get the hang of it. Getting the hang of it may be even easier than you think. Get

to the point fast. In the first sentence or so grab your reader's attention and get your message across quickly. Put first things first. You'll keep the reader's interest longer. And you don't waste their time.

Turn things upside down

The elements of good news writing require that reporters turn things upside down to get the facts straight and told in a fast, easy-to-read manner. You don't want your article to read like the minutes of a meeting or like a speech. Public speakers often lead up to the main point or an announcement.

This keeps the audience listening . . . sometimes. But if you do the same thing, you are most likely to lose your reader.

Use the inverted pyramid which contains all the important information at the start. Then as time and space permit, you can fill in the details.

The five w's: a good news article contains all of the relevant facts answering these questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why? (or How?)

You can't write the article until you have the basic facts. You may not even know what your story is until you have all of the relevant information.

The lead is the most important element of a good news story. A good lead is short and

to the point. That's why it grabs attention. It may be only one sentence, but it is never more than two or three.

When you have all the facts, try to say the main message quickly. Pretend you are that person on the phone making an urgent one-minute call.

You'll find that you leave out some facts because they aren't necessary at that point.

They come later – all the way down to the tip of that "inverted pyramid."

The inverted pyramid by another name is an upside down triangle. The whole point of it is to put the main point at the beginning of the article. Arrange the rest of the facts in descending order of importance, closing with the least important point.

Review your listening skills with this checklist

One-on-one communication is a two-way process, and the part most often neglected is listening. Following are eight poor listening habits. Are you guilty of any of them?

Editing. You hear only what you want to hear, selectively blocking out the rest of what the person is trying to communicate:

Rehearsing. As the person speaks, you are preoccupied formulating what you will say next.

Delving. Instead of listening, you focus on trying to discover a hidden message.

Daydreaming. Failing to concentrate, you allow your mind to wander which often leads to an embarrassing request for the person to repeat what he or she just said.

Personalizing. You relate what is being said to your own experience and allow your thoughts to go off on a tangent. What the person is saying becomes about you, not the speaker.

Switching. You are too quick to change the subject, sending the message that you are not interested in what the other person has to say.

Arguing. You are quick to disparage or ridicule what was just said. You are more interested in verbal sparring than communicating.

Agreeing. You nod and mumble agreement to everything that is said, just to avoid conflict.

Suggestions for an editor's job description

Following are suggestions for use as a guide when considering language in a local or state constitution pertaining to the office of editor. If it is not practical to incorporate the suggestions into the Constitution, another option is adopting them as a standing motion of the local or state organization. (The word "local" can be replaced by "state" where appropriate.)

1. The editor shall be a member of the APWU National Postal Press Association with annual dues paid by the local.

2. The editor shall be a delegate to the PPA National Editors' Conference.

3. The editor shall be responsible for the editing of all material submitted to the news-

letter pertaining to libel, spelling, grammar, violations of federal laws and regulations, length, etc. At no time shall the editor alter the motive or direction of the contributor's article. Should any conflict arise, all reasonable effort should be made to discuss the problem with the contributing writer.

4. The editor shall make every effort to be objective in reporting, writing and editing.

5. The editor shall make every effort to separate news articles from editorial opinion.

6. The editor shall display a proper disclaimer advising the reader that articles published in the newsletter are the opinion of the writer and not necessarily that of the editor or the local.

Playing the media game: how to be an effective spokesperson

No matter how many times you are interviewed, if you are not quoted, if they do not use the information you provided, then you are not being an effective spokesperson. Being an effective spokesperson is not as difficult as you might think. Media is a game. You arrive prepared with a game plan. You have practiced a few plays. You execute the plays. And you know how you want to finish the game.

To win at the media game there are two principles you need to master. You must develop a focused message and you must deliver your message in a believable manner. If your message is strong, but the delivery is poor, you lose credibility and lose the interest of the audience. On the other hand, you may have perfect delivery but your message is weak, too long or complicated. This type of message runs the risk of not being used, or worse, being edited and then misused.

Developing the message

How do you develop a strong and usable message? Whether you are being interviewed for a short news segment or a guest appearance on a longer segment program, the process for developing a focused, usable message is the same. In its simplest form, message development can be boiled down to either a triangle or square three points or four, depending on the length of the interview. For each of your three or four points write a message outline.

This is what you do:

1. Create a headline statement, Look at newspapers and magazines to get some ideas of the type of “punch” a headline statement should have. Then put the headline statement in sentence form so it sounds natural.

2. Prepare three talking points (the “because” points) to support your headline statement. Use facts, figures, examples,

analogies – anything you feel supports your position clearly, strongly and succinctly.

3. Finish with a strong summary statement (the “therefore” statement). The summary statement should tie together the headline statement and the three support



statements and offer a conclusion to your entire message.

Remember, when you are developing your message, keep it short and simple. Following the message development strategy outlined above will properly prepare you for short news interviews or you can elaborate on your position for a longer feature interview. When preparing your talking points for a news interview, the news media will use a 20-second answer. They can't use three minutes. They can use three or four talking points. They won't use eight. And remember, you have the right to know exactly what you are expected to talk about in your interview.

The interview

Now that your message is prepared you are ready for the interview. The most important thing to do now is practice, practice and practice some more. Then stick to your message no matter what curve the media throws at you. The nice thing about this message development system is you don't have to worry about the questions anymore because you know what you are going to say. There is no need to be on the defensive. You are in control. No matter what you are asked, keep bringing the interview back to your three or four points. The best

politicians have learned how to control an interview in this matter. How many times have you heard politicians completely ignore a question or acknowledge a question but continue with their own agenda? All the time – and you should too.

One caution – the easiest way to be misquoted is to repeat a negative or untrue fact a reporter states. If you don't say it, you can't be quoted.

Effective delivery

An effective delivery is as important as a usable message. Bad eye contact or a deadpan look can kill an otherwise good interview. Fortunately, a good delivery can be accomplished by following a few simple rules:

- Sit squarely in your seat, and then lean forward just a bit.
- Use facial animation. It's okay to move your head, to nod or raise your eyebrows. If you don't, you'll look unnatural, too serious and uncomfortable to watch.
- Be aware of eye contact. Look at the reporter. Don't look at the camera. Don't look up when thinking of your answer. Eye shifting makes you look less believable.
- Smile when appropriate. But even when you are not smiling, have a pleasant, interested look. If you look interested in what you are talking about, the audience will be more likely to listen and pay attention to what you are saying.
- Place hands comfortably in your lap.
- Gesture with your hands only if you feel comfortable. If you do use your hands, keep your gestures around your upper chest and close in to your body. Remember the TV screen is a little box. Movements need to be close in to be seen.
- If you are still feeling nervous about being on TV, start with radio. With radio you only need to be concerned with your message and you can get used to being interviewed.

Is this OK to publish?

“Nominations for local union office will take place at the January union meeting.

I have served in my current position for the past three years and plan on running again. I would appreciate your support.”

This wording is an excerpt from an officer’s report article in a local union newsletter.

Is this statement appropriate for an officer’s report article, or is it a potential election law violation? In many locals, union officer elections will occur at the beginning of the coming year. The following information is being provided as a reminder to help avoid election law violations, such as the hypothetical violation at the start of this article.

Title IV of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, as amended (LMRDA or the Act) establishes election procedures to be followed by all unions covered by this Act, regardless of whether their constitution and bylaws so provide. The Act does not spell out detailed procedures; rather, it sets minimum requirements. Beyond this, elections are to be conducted according to the constitution and bylaws of each union, as long as the union’s rules do not conflict with the provisions of the Act.

Under Section 1209 of the Postal Reorganization Act, unions of U.S. Postal Service employees are subject to the LMRDA.

Therefore, the LMRDA administered by the United States Department of Labor must be followed concerning internal union elections. In addition, sections of the Act contain provisions affecting the use of a

labor union publication in internal union elections.

Section 401(g) of the LMRDA provides that: “No monies received by any labor organization by way of dues, assessment, or similar levy, and no monies of an employer shall be contributed or applied to promote the candidacy of any person in any election subject to the provisions of this title. Such monies of a labor organization may be utilized for notices, factual statements of issues not involving candidates, and other expenses necessary for holding an election.”

This means that since a union publication is funded by the union, it cannot be used for the purpose of promoting the candidacy of any individual running for union office. Also, a union website that involves the use of union resources to operate also cannot be used to promote (or attack) anyone’s candidacy. The same is true regarding the use of any union facilities and equipment. Such activity is an indirect expenditure of union funds which is prohibited under Section 401(g) of the LMRDA.

To avoid promoting the candidacy of any person, union publications should afford fair and equal treatment or publicity to candidates for union office and be fair and impartial in reporting the activities of candidates.

If it chooses, a union newspaper can make equal space available to each bona fide candidate running for any particular office, as long as the candidates are notified on an equal basis of the availability of the publication for this purpose. The law is specific in this regard. A union

newspaper has the choice of all candidates for a particular office - or none. Once the publication decides to open the newspaper to candidates, it must offer space to all candidates for that particular office on an equal basis.

Paid political advertising is legal provided that all candidates for a particular office or offices are given an equal opportunity to purchase space for an ad. And, provided that all candidates are charged the same consistent with space used.

Also, a union may neither attack a candidate in a union-financed publication nor urge the nomination or election of a candidate in a union-financed letter to the members.

Newsletter articles should not be used for the purpose of advancing the candidacy of an individual or individuals nor should they be used to attack a candidate or candidates. Submissions for the newsletter should be closely monitored during the election period in order to avoid conflict with the intent of the law.

That raises the question, When does the election period begin? According to the Department of Labor: “Generally, a six month period prior to an election can be considered as time when the newsletter may be construed as a campaign tool. Placement of articles, changes in format, blunt campaigning and letters from members or candidates to the editor could be considered ‘campaigning’.”

Further information concerning union elections as they pertain to union publications is available in the Member Resources section of the PPA website or by contacting the PPA.

How readable is your writing? Perform this test to find out

There’s a simple test for estimating the grade level of your writing. It’s called the *Gunning Fog Index*. Start at the beginning of a sentence and count off a 100-word sample. Count the number of sentences in your sample. Next, count the number of words with three or more syllables. Then do this calculation:

- 100 words
- divided by number of sentences
- plus number of words with three or more syllables

- times .4
- equals years of education needed to read the sample.

For example: $100 \div 6.5$ (number of sentences) + 12 (number of words with three or more syllables) x .4 = 11 years (high school education).

Generally, material should be written at a grade sixth to eighth grade level. If your writing tests consistently over 12 on the Fog Index (college level), you need to use shorter words and sentences.

A look at legal issues: disclaimers and libel

“Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writer and not necessarily those of the union.” The preceding statement (or similar wording) known as a disclaimer is commonly found in newsletters published by APWU local and state organizations. Does such a statement excuse the organization from responsibility should the issue of libel arise? No! This statement merely informs the reader that the union may not agree with opinions expressed by contributors. It provides no legal protection whatsoever.

Another misconception involves the deletion of names as a means to escape a possible lawsuit for libel. If the identity of the person is readily determinable, even if the person is not named, defamatory statements in the article will be libelous. Similarly, if someone makes libelous statements about a group of persons, each person in the group may be defamed, depending upon the size of the group and the nature of the statements.

Keep in mind that the legalities of reprinting a libelous statement are the same as for the party that originated it. Also, just because a statement is true it does not mean that it's OK to print it. If a defamatory statement is published there must be a justifiable reason why the statement was published. In some states it's illegal to publish a true statement for no good reason and with the intent of damaging someone's reputation. In other states it's considered an invasion of privacy if there is no justification for publishing the statement.

Further information on the subject of libel and invasion of privacy is available from the PPA. If you are unsure of whether or not an article is libelous, your Postal Press Association can help. Upon request, (if the

material has not already been published) the PPA will provide a confidential review; offer an opinion, and if warranted, suggestions for rewriting the article to avoid any potentially libelous statements.

How to speak in sound bites

Have you ever seen a veteran politician be interviewed by the press? You've probably noticed a few things that they do in an interview. Skilled politicians will never directly answer a question. No matter what a reporter asks, most politicians will continually give the same answer over and over again.

To the average voter or viewer, this may be frustrating. Why can't they simply answer the questions? The answer is a strategic one. The politician's goal is to deliver his/her message. They have crafted what they believe to be an effective sound bite to deliver their message. And they deliver their message consistently no matter the question.

The effective sound bite follows these key rules:

Be Clear. Speak in simple language that can be easily spoken and understood by people from all different backgrounds.

Be Concise. A good sound bite should be no more than 20-30 words and can be said in 7-10 seconds. It will convey your message easily.

Be Consistent. Repeat the values

you want to get across constantly and consistently. Everything you say should move your message.

Limit your facts. If you are including a fact in your sound bite use only one and remember the previous two rules: concise and consistent.

Be Convincing. Use stories or metaphors to illustrate your points and make it “real” to your listeners. — *ILCA*

