

Meet the Candidates

APWU President Election – Questions & Answers

Each candidates' answers alternate between questions and are in different color as shown below. Initials are bolded for each candidate at the end of each answer.

Mark Dimondstein – Candidate for APWU National President (I) - MD

John Marcotte – Candidate for APWU National President - JM

Please tell our members about yourself. Years of service with the USPS, Union and offices held.

Mark Dimondstein - *I worked as a clerk in Greensboro, NC. I started in 1983 on the old Letter Sorting Machines, then performed a variety of jobs including manual letters, package sortation, and retail window duties. In 1986, I was elected local president and served six terms (12 years). I served as a shop steward for most of my postal career. I have been an arbitration advocate, a labor educator, and have working knowledge of OWCP and EEOC. I worked for a decade as the APWU National Lead Field Organizer during which time I negotiated numerous first contracts after leading organizing campaign victories. Based on that work, I was awarded the "AFL-CIO Southern Organizer of the Year." I was deeply honored to be elected national president in 2013, and am now in my third term. As president I have been responsible for the overall work of the union, was the lead negotiator in the last three contract negotiations with postal management, and instituted a variety of programs that have built the strength of the union, built strong alliances with the public, and protected our jobs and the public Postal Service.*

John Marcotte - *I want to thank and salute the MPWU for this unbiased attempt for more democracy and participation by the membership in our national elections. Please know as a veteran I use the word salute sparingly and with meaning.*

I am proud to be the father of three amazing children that I raised as a single parent while working my bid job and serving as a steward/officer in the APWU. Second, I am proud to be a Postal Worker and member of the APWU because without our union, I would have never been able to be there as much for, or support my kids needs as I did, without our union.

Prior to joining the Post Office, I honorably served six years in the US Navy as a Nuclear Power Reactor Operator and after that as an Operator/Engineer at the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory at Michigan State University.

Shortly after being hired by the Post Office in 1994, I became active in our union, serving as a Steward and then within a year, serving as Craft Director. I went on to

hold several different union positions in APWU Local, Michigan Postal Worker Union and Michigan AFL-CIO.

I was serving as Local and State President when I decided to run for my first national position, APWU Legislative and Political Director in 2013. I was elected by the membership to that position where I served the members of the APWU before being asked to revitalize the APWU's health plan. I accepted the request and successfully ran for APWU Health Plan Director. From 2016-2019, I worked extremely hard and was successful in stabilizing the health plan and getting it going in the right direction.

If you win the next election, what are your goals for your term in office?

John Marcotte - *This question was difficult to answer because there are so many things that the APWU needs to change to improve our members work lives. There are some changes that need to take priority due to the time sensitivity and long-term impact on our membership.*

1. The most important goal is more of a must for our membership, and that is to end the unacceptable and harassing work environment our members are enduring on the workroom floor. This is not a localized problem or limited to "a few bad apples" in supervision. This is a nationwide, systemic, and longstanding issue that continues to get worse and worse. Whatever it takes we must have action on this issue, this was an issue last presidential election.

I do not know how long the current administration is going to continue to promise improvement on this matter, but I do know that enough is enough with the talk and the empty promises and it is time for action. Listening to the incumbent President talk about working conditions it is obvious he has not worked a bid job in a very long time, and it shows in his administration's slow response to this issue. If elected, I will be a bulldog while fighting for an work environment free from harassment and bullying for all our members.

2. Another particularly important need is to stop the long string of concessionary bargaining that has led to substandard wages for postal workers. It is amazing to me that the incumbent has been successful in keeping so many of our members from realizing that their compensation is worse than their counterparts in other Postal unions. Many members do not know that a pre-2011 hired level 6 clerk, at their top step, will effectively make the same money as an after-2012 hired level 4 mail-handler at their top steps. Worse than that, an after 2011 hired level 6 clerk, will make \$1,900.00 less than an after 2012 hired level 4 mail-handler when both are at their top steps and \$3,000.00 less than a level 5 mail-handler at their top step. When did this become okay? There is no defense and no more concise way to highlight the unsuccessful bargaining by the incumbent than APWU higher level members earning less money than other postal unions, lower-level workers, at their top steps. Our members effective dropping 2-3 levels on the pay scale via concessionary bargaining over multiple contracts reduces our members ability to provide for their families, their

pensions, and their thrift savings contributions. Creating tough times now and retirement harsher and harder to achieve later. I will work tirelessly to achieve the pay raises our members need and deserve.

3. I WILL REMOVE THE MANIPULATION, POLITICS, AND RETALIATION FROM THE CULTURE OF THE NATIONAL APWU. I will restore the office of President to one that is laser focused on serving the membership, as opposed to serving the cause of reelection. I will respond to the concerns of our active and retired members regardless of politics, category of the member, size or voting preference of any Local or the Chapter. The APWU was founded as a union family and that means we are all equal and every one of our members concerns and issues have value, and retaliation, and favoritism cannot be allowed. This is essential in repairing and reuniting our union, and a requirement before it can succeed and grow because the current “political atmosphere” is unacceptable and ultimately for the benefit of very few while coming at the expense of the members on the workroom floor.

And to think, this is coming from your former Legislative & Political Director. I believe in getting everything we can in terms of legislation that helps our membership, but I have zero tolerance for internal union politics at the expense of the membership. If this sounds like “campaign propaganda” then you obviously do not know my personality, history, or disgust for the internal politics within the APWU. Call me if you would like to hear more on this subject matter.

4. I will work in a concerted effort with ALL national officers at our National Executive Council Meetings when formulating solutions to our problems, developing ways to better serve the membership, and using technology to bring our members into the 21st century. We cannot solve today’s problems, nor can we tailor our union to fit our current and future members, with outdated tools and methods. I will work to not only provide these tools to those serving our membership but also provide more ways to leverage technology so that our membership can have better direct access to information and their officers at the National level as well. This is the same way that I turned the APWU Health Plan around: leverage technology and give direct lines of contact from the workroom floor to the highest position in that department.

Mark Dimondstein - *My goals are to continue to build on the great progress made over the last eight years, during which time we moved mountains to successfully defend the public Postal Service and our jobs. We allied with the public, took our issues to the TV and radio airways, negotiated solid new contracts in 2015, 2018 and 2021, negotiated more jobs, and won urgently needed legislation. High inflation underscores that it pays to belong to the union. I am proud that in all three contracts since I took office, we have maintained every COLA. In the past, it was commonplace to have some of them eliminated. Going forward, we need to protect the gains of the past, continue the progress already made on eliminating the divisive two-tier wage system instituted in the 2010 contract (which I opposed at the time and my opponent did not), continue to advance the alliance with the people of the country, and further strengthen our membership ranks and solidarity with all workers.*

Are you running as part of a group/team or not? Please explain your reason for running your campaign this way.

Mark Dimondstein - *I am running on the "APWU Solidarity Team" consisting of every incumbent APWU national headquarters officer. At the local and national level, I have always run as part of a team, which I believe helps elect officers who trust each other and will work together once elected. I am humbled that every incumbent officer, those who know my work up close, fully support my candidacy for re-election.*

John Marcotte - *I am running by myself. I hope our membership remembers that most of the National officers in DC ran with me, a challenger for president in the last election and were incumbents themselves at that time, something that is incredibly rare if not unprecedented. Those officers, like myself, saw an urgent need for a different leader. Because I supported those National officers 3 years ago when we ran together, it would be hypocritical of me to ask someone to run against them now. I will not do that. I hope that the membership and my supporters will respect that I value my integrity over increasing my campaign coffers or odds of winning this election.*

So yes, I am running by myself, without a "ticket," and that may hurt my ability to have an inside track to some potential voters, but it is the right thing to do and I am confident that our membership is smart, and will see that wages, benefits, and working conditions are not going to improve unless we change who is elected president of the APWU. I am paraphrasing but electing the same person and expecting different results is the definition of insanity.

As both of you have seen a lot of changes over the years, with the USPS and the APWU, what things would you work towards getting changed in order to improve the APWU.

John Marcotte - *As mentioned above, restoring accountability and correcting management's horrific personnel actions. These actions, left unchecked year after year, has led to the hostile work conditions our members are forced to endure today. Getting this corrected and not just talking about it at election time is job one.*

We must eliminate the two-tier wage scale for career employees, and we must convert the current non-career workforce to career status, thus eliminating the unjust non-career workforce. While we all understand step increases, a union is built on "the same day's work for the same day's pay" principal. These unfair multi-tier classes of our members was put in place in the 2010 contract, and then left in place by the incumbent president for three following contracts, are grossly unfair and corrodes a union from the inside out.

PSEs are not being used as temporary or support employees. They are being taken advantage of and unions do not turn a blind eye to this injustice. If you are working 40

hours a week every week, you are not a support employee. Their families deserve career thrift savings matching, pension contributions, better health care benefits, and wages.

The USPS has hiring problems, high turnover, and retention issues that it has never had before. It is obviously due to a substandard starting wage and benefit package that has replaced the career wage package. A postal worker job used to be highly valued, hiring highly competitive, and with almost zero turnover of employees. This changed with the wrongheaded approach of abandoning the phenomenally successful APWU career wage and benefit package and replacing it with a corporate exploitation of labor model.

Elimination of the non-career workforce not only would massively improve the lives of our members eliminating lost years of work towards retirement contribution and better health care, it makes good business sense for the USPS as it would help solve its high overtime, poor retention, high retraining and burdensome hiring costs. Ending USPS's anti-worker, failed, non-career PSE experiment is overdue. I will devote all the resources necessary and work non-stop to take care of our own and ensure equality among the membership of the APWU.

Mark Dimondstein - *One important area where we can improve the work of the APWU is to better develop, mentor, and inspire new generations of postal worker unionists. And at all levels of the union, we have to pull together to collectively address the outrageous hostile working conditions that are far too prevalent. We have made some progress in this area, but more work is needed.*

What is a long-term goal that you would like to set into motion that may take longer than just one term, yet would be welcomed by your successor?

Mark Dimondstein - *See Above*

John Marcotte - *An issue that will have great positive impact for our membership but will be a difficult lift and most likely requiring multiple terms is to work with our allied Federal/Postal unions to remove the unfair method of calculation and cap on cost-of-living increases for the FERS retirees pensions. The rounding down of the FERS annuity COLAs ensures a yearly loss of purchasing power and huge losses when inflation is over the maximum 3% cap (as it is now with inflation numbers floating between 8% and 9%).*

For example, this year, a FERS retiree, at full retirement age, would effectively lose one out of every twenty dollars (or 5%) in their annuity due to the difference between the COLA they receive, and the money inflation takes away from their pension.

This designed reduction of retiree spending power ensures that paying the premiums for USPS provided health care (currently FEHB) and Medicare B premiums will become unaffordable for large number of our members in FERS retirement as premiums for healthcare quickly eat up a larger and larger percentage of a FERS annuity as its spending power shrinks with inflation. This is even worse when you

consider the recent requirement that our members must pay Medicare B premiums to be eligible for USPS paid health care in retirement. The new law would force a cash strapped FERS retirees who cannot afford both health insurance premiums to give up their USPS paid health insurance. This is because purchasing Medicare B is now a REQUIRED prerequisite for all who retire after 2025 in order to be eligible for USPS paid health insurance in retirement. Of note, Medicare B premiums go up with medical inflation and Medicare A (paid by payroll taxes) is predicted to be insolvent in 2026.

When you think about it, a pension set up to lose money to inflation combined with healthcare costs that are rising at a rate greater than inflation, is a terrifying combination. This is a looming crisis for our active workforce, as well as our FERS retirees, and regardless of how many terms it takes to get this done, or who is in the office of APWU President, getting full COLAs for postal/federal retirees must get done.

Tell the members something positive about your opponent.

John Marcotte - *I have heard him play the banjo at headquarters and I appreciate anyone with musical inclination or ability.*

Mark Dimondstein - *No comment*

What kind of legislation would you encourage and support getting with Congress if elected? (Please be specific)

Mark Dimondstein - *Under my leadership, we worked with both Republican and Democratic Congressional Representatives and many others to achieve historic postal reform legislation. The legislation eliminated the pre-funding mandate that was financially choking the Postal Service, made six-day delivery the law, and established Medicare integration on a prospective basis that will keep everyone in their FEBHP plans and will save both the individual worker and the USPS money on health insurance premiums. We need to continue to work on restoring service standards to July 1, 2012, create an EV postal delivery fleet and public charging station networks at local Post Offices, win postal banking, and correct the injustice of the "windfall" penalty where Civil Service retirees lose much of their earned Social Security benefits. The union continues to strive to legislatively make healthcare a human right and to establish full voting rights as the federal law of the land.*

John Marcotte - *First off, I would get the critical 2012 service standards codified into law, speeding up the mail. Returning to these standards would better serving the public, increase revenue making more money available for our wages and benefits and force the USPS to finally invest in its workforce. Speeding up the mail would make the USPS competitive again with our private sector competition and if we do*

not provide faster service, I fear the USPS is facing the real probability of becoming a shadow of its former great self.

This will not be an easy task as PMG after PMG for over a decade have slowed the mail in the idiotic notion that reducing speed and service in a service industry will be good for the USPS finances and future. Time after time, slowing down the mail has in fact accelerated financial shortfalls and driven away customers. The good news is the will of Congress to put these standards into law was proven back in 2015 when the effort by the APWU to return to service standards that the American people and industry need and deserve were bravely championed by representative David Joyce. Mr. Joyce brought key Republicans to our cause and whipped enough votes to get 2012 service standards through committee against the voiced objections of his Republican chairperson. He helped APWU get a clear majority in a Republican dominated House of Representatives to support speeding up the mail. Our Legislative and Political Department, Mr. Joyce and most critically the APWU membership in Kentucky successfully lobbied then Majority Leader McConnell to include 2012 USPS service standards into the 2016 omnibus budget bill under reconciliation.

The bad news is, after this bipartisan agreement was reached to make speeding up the mail a law, a key Senator was convinced to refuse to allow improving mail service for every American and with that, not allow the USPS to directly compete with speed of delivery against its private sector competition. I was told this Senator did this because he did not want to go against the current APWU incumbent president. Who after the fact, opposed service standards being included in this law. This wrongheaded and non-sensible action wasted incalculable hours of work by members and officers at the local, chapter, state and national levels. Not to mention massive Congresspersons and their staffs time and effort or the impact on APWU jobs, plant closures and consolidations and preventing further slowdowns. It also made the APWU look ridiculous and not trustworthy on Capitol Hill when it comes to legislation. Going back, with a few exceptions, to the same group of law makers and asking again for help speeding up the mail will be difficult knowing what happened in 2015 but speeding up the mail is essential to the survival of the USPS in an ever fast paced world. That is why privatizers have worked hard to slow down the mail and close processing plants repeatedly when it has failed to save money. We must get legislation to speed up the mail and I am uniquely qualified to do just that as I was the APWU Legislative and Political Director the organized and executed the plan that made it a reality in 2015 and I will not abandon our members, congressional allies or the American public when I am elected president of the APWU. I am confident with your help we will get it done.

Secondly, I know that most of our membership does not know that the idea of separating Postal from Federal workers for health insurance was entertained by President Burrus. Then, the delegates at the National Convention, were crystal clear

adopting a resolution mandating that postal workers health insurance would STAY IN A GROUP WITH ALL OTHER FEDERAL EMPLOYEES. It is scary to think what may happen to our health insurance costs when you consider that Postal workers are more expensive to insure and if separated from all other federal employees, the smaller risk pool will also drive-up premiums. This is assuming we do not lose our FEHB in the future now that we are separated from the much larger federal workforce. Also, even current retirees will be forced into the postal only health plan options and even if they choose to not purchase Medicare B they will only be able to choose the postal plans and not be able to return to plans with federal employees. The resolution language was very clear, passed at National convention and must be followed and respected. We need to get with our federal allies and work towards passing legislation that heads off and or repeals the recent law that forces postal workers into a separate group and away from federal workers. In unity there is strength. It is essential to the long-term security of USPS paid health insurance in all of our retirements, no matter how near, distant or current, and it is REQUIRED that the APWU follow the instructions of its delegates at convention. If national officers are allowed to ignore or misinterpret direct instructions from delegates at convention, our union democracy is dead. I will fight to protect the benefits you earn and have earned and the ability of postal workers to retire with quality of life and dignity.

Another issue to approach Congress about is to allow federal and postal temporary workers (like our PSE) who are career be allowed to buy back their PSE time as to count for retirement along the same lines as buyback for military service. This is common sense and would help with members who must have a portion of their time worked at the USPS not count for retirement. A movement to correct this injustice must be created and led by the APWU.

Would you support leveling the election playing field? Each candidate would have access to the same resources, (i.e., mailings, election articles in the APWU news magazine, paid travel to state conventions across the country) so as to not give the incumbent an advantage?

John Marcotte - *Yes. I think the current setup prevents the average postal worker from running for an American Postal Worker Union resident officer position. I believe that any APWU member should be able to run for a nationally elected union position without needing \$50,000, \$100,000 or even \$500,000 to do so.*

1. *The cost to send ONE POSTCARD, to our entire membership, is > \$100,000. I love using the mail at our house and we all understand that mailings cost money, but think about how many mailings you got from the incumbent, in the last election... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5???*

2. *Kelly Press is a company that our union mandates we must use to send out election mail and email blasts to our membership. Each time Kelly Press "hits the send button" to our membership, a candidate must pay around \$3500 for an email.*

Why is our union allowing such profiteering by Kelly Press, the election committee could easily do this and why not multiple bids to perform these services?

The current election system is the opposite of democracy, and it is not the election committees' fault, this has been a big problem with our union for a long time. I have never heard a union ideal that claimed democracy should come second to money. I am proud that as an INCUMBENT officer, I supported the resolution that requires the national officer ballot and a newly created "election magazine" consisting of the candidates' positions to be mailed together, at no cost to the candidates, as an attempt to level the playing field and educate the membership on the candidates. It was shocking last election when they were NOT mailed together by the incumbent's administration. Again, resolutions, decided by our membership at convention, must be followed by all officers of our union. I will ensure that happens.

Also, you are correct, current incumbents use APWU funds to travel to Local, State, Regional, and National events. While at these events, they can meet potential voters. Whereas challengers must spend money out of pocket to travel to events and facilities. I think it would be easier to limit paid travel for officers in an election year to that of their previous two-year average. Or perhaps, change our election cycle to happen outside the state and local convention period. In any event, I defer to the wisdom of the assembled delegates at convention to decide what is best.

However, one thing I will certainly make a priority when elected is to bring ACCOUNTABILITY and TRANSPARENCY to the travel budgets of National officers because it is essential our officers can prove our money has been accurately reported and well spent while squashing rumors of corruption. For example, in 2019 (an election year), our officers travel expenses on the LM2, vary wildly and in some cases cannot be true by personal observation. I don't know if some officers travel is being placed in other budget items and why that would be, but I believe in being honest with the membership. A member should easily find out that information and all officers should be able to defend their reported travel budgets just as easily.

There is no doubt we need election reform and I believe a fair and equitable solution resulting in the most highly qualified and able candidates can run for national APWU office. I believe a solution that creates choice without confusion or chaos is attainable if our Local, State, Chapter and National officers all work to achieve it.

Mark Dimondstein - *I have already worked to "level" the playing field for candidates. When I first ran for national president, I took successful action against the union to ensure that every candidate had access to the members' emails in the possession of the union. Now every candidate does. Once in office, I made more prominent the candidate election articles in the magazine. I supported a special election issue of the magazine to be mailed to every member. I do not support the idea that the hard-working, dues-paying member should pay for candidates' unlimited travel around the country to campaign – which could cost into the millions of dollars. Such expenses should be in the hands of the candidates themselves.*

Any additional statement that you would like to close your interview. (MAX 500 Words)

Mark Dimondstein - *Our union is very democratic, with one person, one vote in our union elections. It is part of what makes us strong. But at election time, anyone can say or promise anything. I urge you to simply make your vote a business decision. Incumbents have to earn your support. I am running on my record of achievements. Many long-term members have identified the new union contract as the "best ever." I was proud to be your lead negotiator and to work collaboratively with our outstanding national negotiating committee. Our legislative victories, where I worked hand in hand with our extremely effective Legislative Director Judy Beard, are second to none with EFEL, \$10 billion of COVID relief to the Postal Service, and historic and urgently needed postal reform. We had a strong health and safety response to the pandemic, including the negotiated liberal leave policy. I led in negotiating the residual vacancy MOU that has led to the conversion to career of 100,000 former PSEs, as well as a series of staffing memos which increased the Clerk complement by 10,000 workers. We have secured new work guarantees for PTFs. We won an all-career maintenance workforce. We achieved an all-career workforce in Motor Vehicle with the exception of "new work." Under my leadership we launched the three-year campaign to stop the Staples privatization of retail scheme. We won the Stop Staples fight and potentially protected tens of thousands of clerk jobs. In addition, we have built "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service" which proved invaluable when the previous White House openly planned to sell off the public USPS to private companies for private profit. We launched the campaign for postal banking, established closer working relations with the other postal unions around common ground, strengthened the work of the Retiree Department, encouraged the participation of young workers, and worked in solidarity with the general labor movement. We have not won every battle, but overall, as a union we have collectively achieved outstanding results over my three terms. I respectfully ask for your support and vote, and for all the members of the APWU Solidarity Team. Let's keep the progress going! I have always believed and advocated that the union belongs to the members. I continue the commitment to you that I made when I first ran for office in 2013 -- I will always be honest with you, the member, and always put the members first.*

John Marcotte - *Our national union needs to deliver more value to while being more transparent and in touch with their membership.*

APWU members continue to suffer under hostile working conditions on the workroom floor. Our members via bad negotiating, are paid less than other USPS employees at lower levels, going against common sense and the history of the positions. Also, forced overtime has turned into a way of life instead of for peak periods or volunteers. This is simply the USPS refusing to convert and staff properly. Forty hours a week should be enough to pay our bills. Fixing APWUs unfairly low wages and the working

conditions for our members is job one when I am elected. Overtime should be an option, not a mandate. Dignity and respect are never an option.

The incumbent continues to “cheerlead” lousy dollar amount raises, despite Postal workers are being pushed further behind due to COLAs not coming close to keeping up with inflation. The incumbent avoids the subject of inflation because these TINY PAY RAISES WILL NOT COME CLOSE TO KEEPING UP! Your purchasing power decreasing means a lower standard of living now as well as an exponentially lower standard of living in retirement, due to more of your paycheck going toward living expenses and less toward your TSP, other investments, or savings. Now and in retirement, this will be devastating.

The incumbent trying to spin these contracts and his actions as a positive, illustrates the disconnect with our members working hard to provide for their families. I know what it is like to struggle financially while raising a family. I will not forget where I came from. When elected I will serve the membership and I WILL NOT ignore the struggles of our membership.

The incumbent has had NINE YEARS AND THREE CONTRACTS to show what he can do, and he has shown:

- 1. To be disconnected from our membership*
- 2. He believes to be above the rules of the APWU*
- 3. Money wins elections*
- 4. Lower standards of living for our membership are acceptable*

Any honest person that knows me well will say I:

- 1. Have the energy, drive, and doggedness to get the APWU back on track*
- 2. Will fight for and win for our members*
- 3. Consider myself one of you my union family, always working on your behalf and not being self-interested or above the rules.*

*Far less than 20% of our membership voted in 2019. The incumbent received less than half of that small percentage. VERY FEW Votes are needed to change the APWU's direction. I whole-heartedly believe that without the APWU, me and my family would not have the life we have today. I want to pay that debt back by serving you as your president. So, if you want our union to continue to drive off course then vote for the incumbent or do not vote at all but if you want to turn things around, vote for **John L. Marcotte for APWU President** this September.*