



POST OFFICE MAY BE ABLE TO LAYOFF WORKERS SOON



Few people inside of the United States are not familiar with the US Postal service. They bring you the mail each day and their white and blue trucks can be spotted from a least a quarter of a mile away on even an over cast day. What we don't really think about when we look in our boxes is how big of an employer the Postal Service really is. As the service is looking down the barrel of what they call "dire" money woes, they could become insolvent. That puts the roughly 560,000 full-time workers that the organization employs in a precarious position, because if the financial problems cannot be worked out and the US Postal Service goes the way of the Pony Express then they could all be out of a job in the near future. In order to help alleviate their money woes the postal service is hoping to re-negotiate the contract that they have with its 560,000 employees. There is no word yet about how the union is going to respond to the negotiations. People are taking a look at the way that this may go down. Debra Roth, a partner at Shaw, Bransford and Roth, sat down with reporters at Federal Drive, and she had this to say about the situation, "A lot of people inside and outside the government on The Hill are watching how Congress deals with the Postal Service because they are having fiscal problems...Not the same kind of fiscal problems the rest of the government's having, but labor contracts are getting in the way of dealing with one aspect of getting out of their fiscal crisis." She then went on to explain why it is so hard for the US Postal Service to cut labor costs by telling the reporters that, "Their union contracts bar layoffs...That's the kernel of the problem here." In order to solve that problem the management of the Postal Service has gone to Congress. They have asked them to pass a law that will ban the requirement in negotiated agreements that bar layoffs. That would mean that a contract, with layoffs, could be re-negotiated with the ability to lay staff off in place. A bill to that effects currently under consideration by the House of Representatives. If it passes then the union and the Postal Service will almost have to re-negotiate and create a contract under new terms. Layoffs will almost certainly follow a change in the contract. The question is why does the Post Office need to cut back? What got them into such dire straights? Well, as email has come into style less of us are sending printed letters, about 22% less. In addition the Postal Service has competition in the form of both UPS and FedEx. Unlike the postal service these companies can charge what they like and can get rid of surplus staff at will. In addition, unlike other federal agencies the Post Office does not receive money from the government, Other federal agencies, assuming when Congress passes its budget, they at least get funded," Debra Roth said. "So they're being funded at their current levels and when they see what the cuts are, everybody will know what their budget is. For the Postal Service, it's all based on their mail volume, so they know they're in decline."

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