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### Post Office + unions = millions for idleness

Jim Brown - OneNewsNow - 10/2/2009 10:20:00 AM



Many Americans may be outraged to find out that while the United States Postal Service is facing a \$7 billion deficit this year and [receiving a \\$4 billion bailout from Congress](#), the government agency is spending more than a million dollars each week to pay thousands of employees to sit in empty rooms and do nothing.

The [Federal Times](#) reports the Postal Service is paying out 45,000 hours of "standby time" every week -- the equivalent of having 1,125 full-time employees sitting idle, at a cost of more than \$50 million a year. Postal union officials estimate that 15,000 employees have spent time this year holed up in so-called "resource rooms" where they read books, do word puzzles, or sleep -- and get paid for it.

Tad DeHaven, a budget analyst at the [Cato Institute](#), says the Postal Service is experiencing serious financial woes in large part because 80 percent of its cost is tied up in labor.

"The Postal Service labor force is heavily unionized," he points out, "and the fact that they can't set aside these people or fire people, or reduce wages or time, or furlough [them] or anything, is all a function of the union contracts that they operate under."


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DeHaven says the American Postal Workers Union, with government protection, is extracting excess wages, benefits, and privileges that other people in the country do not get.



"Now in the private sector, businesses have to adapt. They have to change their model; they have to unfortunately get rid of workers sometimes and rebuild their business model and adapt to the times," he explains. "Well, the Post Office is hamstrung -- and I almost feel bad for the management. They know what they need to do, to some degree, but they can't do it because of collective bargaining and unionism."

DeHaven says what is "doubly insulting" is that idle Postal employees are earning a paycheck from hard-working citizens who are struggling through the current recession.



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