

# USPS facilities face possible closure

ACCORDING to a recent AP report, the Postal Service is considering closing hundreds of local facilities due to huge financial losses, \$7 billion this year, despite a 2-cent rate increase in the cost of postage stamps. Since 2000, around 150,000 workers have been laid off and hundreds of mail collection boxes have been removed to save money.



Officials said a list of around 700 out of the 32,741 post offices across the country are being reviewed for closing. The Associated Press reported that Postal Vice President Jordan Small told a congressional subcommittee that local managers will study activities of approximately 3,200 stations and branches across the country, considering factors such as customer access, service standards, cost savings, impact on employees, environmental impact, real estate values and long-term Postal Service needs. No changes are expected before the end of the current fiscal year on Sept. 30.

The AP article quoted Small as saying, "We anticipate that out of these 3,200 stations and branches (being reviewed), under 1,000 offices could be considered as viable candidates to study further for closing."

### Pinoys' favorite workplace

As far back as the early 1920's, many Filipino immigrants in America sought employment at the US Post Office. According to Barbara Posadas who wrote Filipino Americans in Chicago, beginning in the 1920-1930 period, "most Filipinos in Chicago worked at a variety of jobs categorized as service employment. The most secure sources of employment were with the United States post office as clerks sorting the mail..."

What has been true in Chicago has generally been true across America. Because of the relatively easier job, the good pay and employment benefits and the security of tenure, the US Post Office has been a favorite workplace of many Pinoys. All that may soon change.

With this sad news, many Filipinos are sure to be affected. The big number of Fil-Ams working in the Post Office are attested by the fact that they have formed many associations in the country such as the FilAm Postal Employees Association of America, the Filipino American Association of Postal Employees, the Filipino Association of LA Post Office Employees, the FilAm Postal Employees Association of Pasadena, of San Francisco, of Palatine & Northwest Suburbs, of Stockton, of the Midwest, of Santa Clara County etc.

### Studying the situation

In a statement made to the *Asian Journal* by James Wigdel from Public Affairs at the USPS San Francisco District, he said that they are

not closing post offices yet, "but are studying for possible consolidations in some areas." He also said that nothing has been decided and that everything is just a study at this point. He added that they are "taking into consideration some large urban areas such as the City of San Francisco, which has 41 postal offices and they are looking at three post offices," possibly, for a consolidation.

Richard Maher, Spokesperson for USPS throughout Southern California echoed almost the same details, adding that they are not closing major post offices and are doing studies for the possibility of consolidating stations and branches. He also emphasized that they will be transparent in their actions and will ensure that the public be notified and communities be made aware of any new developments.

With regards to the layoffs, Maher said that in the event of a consolidation, they will be working to re-assign their employees, possibly to another facility or under a different job position.

Because of USPS' financial situation, Maher said that they have offered some of their employees early retirement and that they are looking to fill up vacancies left by retirees with their current employees.

### Volume decline

Aside from the recession which has reduced advertising mail, the Postal Service has been hurt by the switch of business to the Internet, and last year's high gas prices which impacted their daily deliveries. In 2008, the volume of mail dropped to 9.5 billion pieces for a total of 203 billion pieces. This year, it is expected to further fall by 28 billion pieces to a total of 175 billion pieces.

According to the AP report, Congress is considering a bill to change the way the post office funds its retiree health benefits over the next two years that could save \$2 billion annually. In addition, Postmaster General John Potter has asked Congress for permission to reduce mail deliveries from six days a week to five. While Congress votes money for free mail delivery for the blind and to offer reduced rates to charities, the post office does not receive taxpayer funds for its operations. (AJPRESS)

# Fil-Ams receive \$74M each in lawsuit vs. Guess? founder

by JOSEPH PIMENTEL  
AJPRESS

LOS ANGELES—TWO Filipino-Americans were among the five people awarded over \$370 million in a counter defamation case against Guess? Inc. founder Georges Marciano.

Last week, a Los Angeles jury awarded Fil-Am 55-year-old Camille Abat and three others each \$69 million in compensatory damages and \$5 million in punitive damages. All five were former employees of Georges Marciano's Inc.

"I think the plaintiffs displayed real courage," said Attorney Cheryl Deptowicz-Diaz, who represented Tagle in this case. "They fought back against one of the most powerful and richest men they have ever known. Marciano made it his business to do everything in his power to destroy their lives. But, the jurors' verdict was a bold message that civilized so-

ciety will not tolerate such disregard of people's lives. Working people, women, and people of color stood tall today against their tormentor, and they have every reason to be proud."

On his website, Marciano issued a statement saying the "trial that was a complete sham and mockery of justice."

"The actions taken by Judge [Elizabeth] White in this one-sided affair were a clear abuse of power, Mr. Marciano is confident that the Court of Appeal will overturn this unjust, abusive and excessive judgment and he will continue to fight for justice through the appeals process," the statement said.

Tagle served as Marciano's bookkeeper for nine years. Abat worked as a receptionist. In 2006, Marciano fired the five defendants "without any warning," according to Deptowicz-Diaz.

In 2007, Marciano accused the five former employees of embezzling millions of dollars

from him, stealing artwork and fine wines from his collection and other personal belongings.

The judge threw out Marciano's lawsuit in December 2008. The employees then filed a cross-complaint, alleging defamation and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The judge found Marciano liable in May and a jury determined that Marciano defamed the former employees and caused them emotional distress.

Deptowicz-Diaz said her client knows that this case is no over. Tagle, who declined to speak to the *Asian Journal*, just wants the case to be settled.

Marciano, who announced he would run for Governor of California, is also suing the presiding judge alleging constitutional violations.

The 62-year-old is the founder of designer clothing label Guess? Inc. His brothers bought him out for over \$200 million in the early 1990's. ■

# Mabuhay Alliance, HomeFree USA...

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who are facing foreclosure. At present, more than 40 percent of homeowner is states such as Arizona, California, Nevada and Florida are deeply underwater. The "Tenant to Homeowner" could well be the solution as loan modification programs are failing to address the foreclosure crisis in these states.

"We have come to a conclusion from this meeting that every one of the banks realizes that not enough is being done on the loan modifications," said Counsel Bob Gnaizda and added, "And that they would prefer to have more federal assistance, whatever they

do. The tenant to homeownership program we think that will going to evolve from this, would be pilot programs quickly implemented in key areas of the nation, where people are underwater."

Home FreeUSA President Marcia Griffin believes that a very important component in the program is their campaign "Project Restore," a credit, financial restoration program for homeowners that they have been working on with Mabuhay Alliance for the last year. "We feel that a modification is not enough," said Griffin and added, "and it's certainly not a good idea to put people out of their homes.

But in addition to stimulating the whole country, stimulating the banks, we've created this program which will be used in conjunction with our tenant to homeownership."

Last month, Mabuhay Alliance spearheaded meetings with top officials of various government offices in Washington, DC in an offer to alternative to solve the current housing crisis. The Federal Reserve meeting last August 7 comes soon after the failed discussions on loan modifications held by Treasury and HUD last July 28 with the 25 largest servicers. (Malou Liwanag-Aguilar)

# Miriam Santiago supports...

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Villar's NP since they are both members of the Wednesday Club formed by Sen. Joker Arroyo.

### Recto keeps options open

"(Former) Senator Recto is definite on running, he told me so. It might be a question of what party. He will be obliged to run with the administration party," she said.

But she quickly added that "maybe for the sake of delicadeza, (there's an) indication that he will

run under Villar's ticket."

"I don't have a party yet. I will consider all options," Recto said, when asked by phone if he would join other political parties not allied with the administration.

### Opposition open

Recto ran for senator as guest candidate of the administration Team Unity ticket in 2007, but lost. ■

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