

# MICHIGAN MESSENGER



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## President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten  
President



Since my last article, I have been extremely busy spreading the horror about the Presidential Commission report. I truly believe the outcome will be well worth the effort. My first opportunity came when I was the host on a daily talk show with one of our local radio stations. I explained to the interviewer the reason and the extreme importance to all citizens, if the Presidential Commission recommendation were ever acted upon. This show airs daily for an hour in the Tri-Cities area. From all the feedback I have received so far, I think the listening audience received the message and will hopefully assist in this challenge that we all have.

Area 11 Director, Mike Wekwert set up the next function I was at. This was a town hall meeting in Saint Ignace and was well attended. There was a representative from Congressman Stupak's office, along with the city's Mayor and members from the city council. Also in attendance were local citizens, members from two media papers, along with postal clerks, city and rural carriers. I thought this meeting went very well and I am assured that these people will follow up with letters or whatever else they can do.

Along with MPWU State Retiree Chapter President Al Labrecque, myself, and Mike Wekwert, we held the next town hall meeting in Alpena. At this meeting, there were some of the same people stated previously, but there was also a group from the local Democratic Party there to hear our concerns. As we all know, we have to get this word out to not only the rural areas, but also in all of our cities. Any closing will have a huge impact, not only on small rural towns, but for everyone. We have another meeting planned for Gaylord in January along with another in Sault Saint Marie.

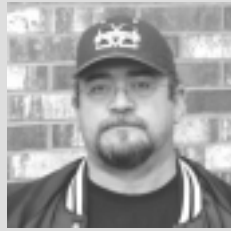
I have noticed that if you ask many of these concerned citizens, they have no idea what is forthcoming and the possibilities that they may face in the future. So for any of you, no matter what the size of your city, contact local authorities and get them involved. Go to a council meeting, meet with the mayor and the local elected officials. They will be there to back us up and you know for a fact that they will be concerned about the

future of their mail delivery.

In the last edition of the Michigan Messenger, there were sample letters for you to send to your Senators and Congressperson. Make sure you write! Tell them how it will personally affect you, your family, and your community. When sending these letters out, make sure you send them to a local office of these representatives, because if they go to Washington, it takes sometimes three weeks to get them through the system. We have to stay on top of this thing because as they meet in Washington on the future of the Postal Service, we do not want to be too late. You have to act not and get those letters out NOW.

Finally, after months of negotiating, we now have a signed contract for the Constitutional Convention in Lansing. The information has been posted on the state's website and is also included in this edition of the Michigan Messenger. Any changes or further updates will be posted on the website, along with future editions of the Messenger. The Holiday Inn has given us a decent package that is comparative to those in the past and I am sure that all of you will be satisfied with it. We will be on the American

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## Secretary's Writings

Harold Juhl  
Executive Secretary



## Education at Work

Lynn Pallas-Barber  
Director of Research & Education

The year of 2003 is coming to an end, but the struggle with the Postal service will continue on for the APWU. There are many issues that we will have to face in the near future. The Presidential Commission Report and how Washington handles this report is very vital to us and our future with the Postal Service. Our National Officers at Headquarters will continue to fight this report, but they need the support all of the members of the APWU. One way to help is to donate at least one dollar per pay period to COPA. This will help us when we rally for help from our leaders in Washington, D.C.

Other issues that we will be facing is the likeliness of Plant closings, more excessing of employees, the continuing battle with management at the local level on various issues such as casuals in lieu of, Overtime, primary duty assignments when moving employees from section to section. These are just a few issues of many that we have to continue to fight for on behalf of our members. Remember that the strength of the Union is and will always be in numbers. We the members of the APWU need to get out there and recruit these non-members who are reaping all of the same benefits that you are receiving and not paying dues to get those benefits. We need to concentrate on the organizing of the thousands of employees within the Postal Service to make our Union even stronger than what it is today. Let's get out there and ORGANIZE!!

I attended the Clerk Craft Conference in Vegas and it was one of the better Conferences that our National has put together. The training classes were what we needed at this time. Excessing, Casuals in lieu of, Bargaining Unit Work, and Primary Duty Assignments were classes that we needed to take that information back to our respective Locals and use to help protect our members and their rights under the National Agreement.

The State Convention for next year, which is being hosted by my local (CMAL 488-489), is coming together and it looks like we will have a good one for all who attend.

Watch the Michigan Messenger for more information on the Convention. Convention Call letters will be going out soon, so you should be planning to get your resolutions

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### NEED HELP?

While attending the Clerk Craft Conference in Las Vegas a presentation by Bob Tunstall introduced the delegates to LifeCare, Inc. This is a partnership entered into with the USPS and the APWU. LifeCare partners with managed health care providers, benefits providers, human resource service providers and numerous EAPs to offer comprehensive, integrated and benefit solutions.

LifeCare can help you manage daily responsibilities. There are numerous services for your family, health and wellness, education, financial/legal and just plain daily life. LifeCare is widely recognized for its innovative use of technology to deliver personalized Services. The company's leading-edge technology, including its web site and call center. Offers users an optimum combination of ease or use and privacy. LifeCare is available

24 hours a day, seven days a week. If every day life is becoming a real challenge maybe the help you need is available, call the toll free number 800-873-4636 or access their website at [www.lifecare.com](http://www.lifecare.com)

### RI-399

One of the latest responsibilities I have accepted is serving as arbitration advocate for the Central Region for RI-399. Yes, RI-399 is not dead!! The training we were given was very informative and a lot of work is yet to come. One of the issues stressed in the training is the Local Inventory. Way back when, in 1992 facilities where mail handlers were employed was instructed to do a tripartite Local Inventory. The parties were to sit down and determine what work in certain operations was that of the Clerk Craft and what was mail handler. If a dispute had not been filed prior to April 29, 1992 then the work stayed in the current craft. A Local Dispute Resolution Committee (LDRC) was also to be organized. The committee was to exist of the APWU, Mail Handlers Union and Postal Management. During this training it became apparent that probably a number of plants and mail processing centers never had an inventory, or no longer have an inventory and the local committee is defunct.

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## The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long  
Editor



## Clerk Craft Report

Bob Maloney  
Clerk Craft Director

I would like to begin by apologizing for the lateness of the last edition. The Messenger was taken to our printers on October 5<sup>th</sup>, but due to problems at the printers, it was produced and sent to the mailer until October 22<sup>nd</sup>. I have discussed this problem with the printer, and hopefully it won't happen again.

Much has happened since the last edition of the Messenger. Elections were held in the Saginaw and Detroit locals. Congratulations to the newly elected Presidents and Executive Boards in both these locals. You are going to have a difficult time with all the changes forthcoming with Congress and the Presidential Commission. On a lighter side..."Are you sure you wanted this?" To the outgoing Presidents and Executive Board members, I would like to express my thanks for your help in everything you did for not only your local, but for the state organization as well. I look forward to still seeing you at upcoming state events. On the National front, Robert Tunstall (APWU Secretary/Treasurer) has stated that he will retire as of December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Locally, the District Meeting date has been changed. Due to a conflict with the National President's Conference, the Area 7 & 9, along with Editors' Meeting has been changed to March 4-6. Tony Carobine will be instructing a class on March 5<sup>th</sup> for anyone that would like to attend on Local Publications and Elections.

In closing, with winter now here, I hope each of you are safe and warm during this time of the year. Make sure you get out and enjoy everything living in a state with four-seasons has to offer. I would also like to wish each of you and yours a very Happy Holiday season. I look forward to seeing many of you next year at the either the District Meeting or Convention.

Until Next Time,

Yours in Solidarity,

*Mike*

As your Clerk Craft Director, I recently attended the 2003 Clerk Craft Convention, which was held in Las Vegas from October 27 through October 29th. This year's convention was the largest as far a members attending. The National Union had planned on possibly 1,800 clerks attending; however over 2,200 clerks showed up. That, in itself, tells you there is a lot going on in our craft at the Post Office, and not all of it is good.

The first day instruction dealt with Article 12, as it pertains to excessing. Since this is one of the main problems going on in our craft, interest among the attendees was high. Over many years of attending these type of workshops, one can generally hear a lot of noise or conversations while the teachers or speakers do their presentation; but for this one in particular, you could of heard the proverbial pin drop in the conference center. Much of the discussion centered on excessing in an office by section or by the unit and how your local memorandum of understand would be used in regards to your office. Conversation on the pros and cons of each, such as how if by the unit, how could we hold down the disruption of clerks leaving the office by going to a different type of job in the office. Or the other side of the coin, where you could have a window clerk with less seniority than a manual sortation clerk staying in the office and the distribution clerk being excessed out of the unit. Also discussed was the rights of Veterans as well as Union Stewards in regards to be excessed or not being excessed or in what kind of order they would go. They touched on many other factors such as residual bid positions, time-line for notifications for both the employee and the union for excessing to other crafts and to lover levels. Much information to digest.

On the second day, we talked about what is known as the "Hub Clerk" position. This came about because management was utilizing clerks in small AO offices to work in other Post Office to try to get them more hours of work. At the time, it was a good idea; but like any idea the Postal Service thinks up, it has flaws, and this was no exception. Postmasters in small offices did not want to pay for their clerks' travel time, as well as mileage, saying it was the other office that should be picking this cost up. Some of these clerks stop getting any money for this travel, which is

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## Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque  
MPWU Retiree's Chapter Dir.



## NBA Report

Jerome "Jerry" Martin  
NBA - Clerk Div. - Chicago

**Amazing Response:** In the face of an impending blizzard and high winds warning, more than 20 APWU clerks, rural and city carriers, and organization leaders from Alpena, Atlanta, Mio, Rogers City, and points between, attended a hastily put together informational forum on the Presidential Commission on the USPS in Alpena on Nov. 12th.

It was my privilege to assist MPWU Area 11 Dir., Mike Wekwert, in hosting the 'pizza' meeting where we furnished attendees volumes of information materials to educate them on the threats the Commission's report to Congress poses for postal workers, the USPS, and American mailing public.

MPWU President, Gary Van, who has been traversing the state conducting similar "Town Hall" type meetings, participated, as did Sue Adams, staff aide from Congressman Bart Stupak's Alpena District office. Citizen involvement by members of the Alpena and Montmorency Counties Democratic Parties put the success of the forum over the top.

After Brothers Wekwert, Gary Van and I made our presentations covering all the 'sins' of the Commission's recommendations; Sue Adams from Rep. Stupak's District office reinforced our APWU contentions and assured us of the 1st District Congressman's support in the U.S. House. Most importantly, Adams stressed the absolute necessity of writing Rep. Stupak and all our Members of Congress, so when the debate reaches the floors of the U.S. House and U.S. Senate, legislative Representatives (like Stupak) and Senators can have letters, faxes, and e-mails in hand to demonstrate to their colleagues constituent opposition to the Commission's proposals.

Most encouraging was a proposal by the Montmorency Dems to promote a massive letter writing campaign by furnishing members on their lists copies of letters to Members of Congress with stamped, addressed envelopes. At the close of the forum, participants absolutely astounded Mike, Gary and I by contributing an unsolicited excess of \$150. to finance postage and envelopes for the suggested letter writing campaign. I guess we really reached them! The Montmorency County Dems have already ex-

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### Las Vegas Again!

The APWU Clerk Conference was held in Las Vegas. Many members complained that their representatives are only going on a junket to have fun. That is true! Anytime your officers, stewards and activists go out of town, I hope they have fun. Face it, it's no fun getting beat up every day on the workroom floor, not by the Bosses, but by the members. How come I have to work my holiday, how come I can't work my holiday, etc. It's not easy being a Steward, so once in awhile there is a convention, seminar or educational conference that they go to. Those aren't fun either. Meetings go all day, so who cares if someone has some fun on their own time, no one should care. We all need a break, a chance to get reinvigorated or refueled. The Clerk Craft Conference in Vegas was just that! The classes were all informative and gave insight to what the APWU is facing and will face in the next few years. Vegas always sounds glamorous to anyone who hasn't been there, but it's only heat and neon lights. The advantage is the cost. When our Conference of over 2,000 from across the nation has to go somewhere the cost for transportation and rooms can't be beat.

Besides all host hotels are 100% unionized in Vegas. So your officers and stewards went to Vegas they learned a lot and had a little fun to boot. Good for them and they helped the Union in Vegas as well!

### Wow, 40 Years!

November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was killed. I know that this real mystery will never be solved. Lee Harvey Oswald, ha! J.F.K. gave all postal employees what we have today. The postal department hadn't had an exam for years. Two months after J.F.K. was inaugurated in 1961, they gave the Clerk-Carrier exam. Hundreds of thousands of Americans took this exam. Thousands were hired. Under the Republican Eisenhower administration, no one was hired for 8 years, except as a temp. Kind of like the Bush theory, poor economy, get the people who need jobs to work at the post office for casual wages with no benefits.

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*Spreading the Word about the Presidential Commission Recommendations  
Town Hall Meetings in St. Ignace (November 5th) and Alpena (November 12th), Michigan*



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President's Report Continued

Plan while there. If you are registered for the Convention and are staying at the Holiday Inn, it is a MUST that you be on the American Plan. This is how we are able to negotiate for everything that goes along with the Convention preparations.

Executive Secretary, Harold Juhl, will be sending out the Convention Call in the proper time. I would ask each local President, please send me your list of delegates, to include their craft once you have them. Once I have received this information, we will be able to compile this information, set up the committees, and put delegates in proper resolutions that affect their craft. This way, when the Convention Books are printed and the delegates get their materials at registration, they can look in the book and see what committee they are on. We know that there are some last minute changes, but for a majority, we like to have all delegates placed in a committee prior to the Convention.

When we left the last Convention on Mackinac Island, it was my goal to have the conventions set as soon as possible. With the Constitutional Convention set, I can also say that I have already planned and signed a contract for the 2005 Educational Convention in Kalamazoo. This package was negotiated with an American Meal Plan. During our negotiations with the hotel, Dan Fisher from the Kalamazoo's Convention and Visitors Bureau was in attendance. We have received word that the Visitor's Bureau will be there to assist us with the whole week. They will be providing information that will be available to us for events and places to see and things to do for the entire family during our stay there. Director of Education Lynn Pallas-Barber and Local President, Mickey Elmore will be going to the hotel at the conclusion of the District Meeting in Grand Rapids to meet with the staff at the hotel and will make sure that things will be in tact for our convention.

This is the last issue before the Winter Season. I came from Alpena, where as I said I was with Mike Wekwert and Al Labrecque, I left 5" of snow and 50 mile per hour winds to get home. I know I have said it before, but this is a critical time for all Postal Employees. This goes for all window clerks, clerks that sort the mail, to the mechanics who work on the machines, to the custodians that keep our buildings clean and safe, and for anyone that I may have forgotten. We have always been there for this challenge to get the people their mail and I see no different this year. I hope all of you enjoy your winter, and have a safe one. Happy Holidays to all of you and your families and God Bless America.

In Union Solidarity,



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Secretary's Writings Continued

together to submit for the Convention. Letters will be mailed out to all Locals with the information they need for submissions of those resolutions. There is a time frame, which has to be followed in these submissions to help me get everything together for the Convention. Please watch for upcoming information.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone safe and happy holidays. Winter is fast approaching and with that comes bad weather and bad road conditions. Drive safely and enjoy this winter.

In Solidarity,



*(Continued from page 2)*  
Education at Work Continued

It was strongly suggested that as local leaders we need to address this issue again at the local level. The possibility of plant closings and consolidations could cause the crossing of jurisdictional lines and probable RI-399 disputes.

There was some disheartening grumbling among the trainees in the class. Too many of our Clerk Craft brothers and sisters are unwilling to do some of this work. They don't want to get their hands dirty, or they don't want to do any heavy lifting. Some day you maybe replaced with a mail handler. Think about it!!

#### USE OF GLOVES ON AUTOMATED EQUIPMENT

In case you didn't know, the APWU at the national level has been pursuing the issue of wearing gloves on automated equipment. At the request of the APWU, OSHA initiated an investigation into the USPS policy of not allowing us to wear gloves around automated equipment. The APWU asserted that gloves were necessary to protect our members' hands from hazards such as cuts and scrapes and even more important biological and hazardous material in the mail. We've just seen again recently where poison and anthrax were found in the mail.

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Education at Work Continued

OSHA conducted an investigation and concluded that there was no evidence to determine that the use of Nitrile gloves around mail processing equipment contributed to an increase in the number of potential hand injuries. PROTECT YOURSELF AND WEAR GLOVES.

A.M. STANDARDIZATION PILOT

In a memo dated November 5, 2003 I was notified that early next year, the Lakeland Performance Cluster would be participating in a national pilot program to standardize A.M. operations in delivery units. The pilot program is to include one plant location and all Level 21 and above offices served by the processing facility.

I have requested additional information, but have not received any thing as I write this article. I have to wonder if this is the same Delivery Pilot Program that has been going on here in the U.P. of Michigan . The program here included three (3) associate offices, Marquette, Ishpeming and Negaunee Michigan. The largest of these offices is Marquette. Management was able to reduce 4800 clerk craft hours in this office, two full-time positions. They of course think this is a huge accomplishment. They delay mail 24 hours and cut jobs out of the community. Great accomplishment!

IT PAYS TO BELONG

In November of 1998 management in the UPMPC, Kingsford, Michigan improperly reverted two manual distribution positions. Our local filed a grievance and went to the arbitration table on Dec. 6, 2002. The arbitrator sustained the grievance. Two senior employees in Kingsford bid on the jobs, which had to be reposted. The arbitrator also awarded the relief requested by the union. On October 24, 2003, management processed two pay adjustments one for \$95,578.32 and the second for \$75,868.38.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Best wishes to all for happy holidays and a prosperous New Year.

Until next time,

*Lynn*

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Clerk Craft Report Continued

a violation of the ELM. Well, the National Union signed an agreement with the USPS making it the employee's home office, no matter how my offices you worked at, responsible for these payments of travel time, as well as mileage. Also, the home office Postmaster would be responsible for making up the schedule of the offices that the PTF would be working in. Again much talk on overtime, number of hours the employee may work in a service day, how many miles away from the home office can the clerk travel, etc. This day was as involved as the excessing class. I have copies of this agreement if anyone wants one, just call me and let me know your address.

Another item that I was glad to see finally agreed upon is that management is not allowed to issue discipline for ANY items stemming from the Mystery Shopper or any other local or district-wide program that might have been created as an offshoot of the Mystery Shopper program. In a nutshell, any program that your office or your District has come up with regardless of what they call it, (e.g. Mystery Observer, etc.) can not be the bases for discipline. This has been a pet peeve of mine from the beginning of the Mystery Shopper, that the Postal Service has said over and over again, this is not for the purpose of discipline but only a tool for Management to use to see where they need to improve their window services - Period. Management tried to circumvent this by giving direct order to the clerks to ask all the questions whether they applied or not; well, they finally put that pig to bed too. Again, I know that Postmaster in small office will try to say it doesn't apply here, or just stone wall it, but of course, I have copies of that letter too. Again, if you need a copy of your Postmaster or POOM, or for your grievance, call me, I can always make more.

Stay Strong,

*Bob*



*Make your voice heard on Capitol Hill. Write your congressional representatives!*

***THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES for the January/ February 2004 Edition of the MICHIGAN MESSENGER is January 15, 2004***

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**Retiree Involvement Continued**

panded this effort in their rural county. It's now up to us to keep this most encouraging momentum going in this mostly rural area of N.E. Michigan. This positive experience can be a blueprint for similar efforts across the state.

**Retiree Action:** I'm receiving reports from retirees across Michigan advising they have sent their letters to Members of Congress...AND I THANK THEM ALL ! Keep it up! It looks like legislation on the Commission's recommendations will hit the floors of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House no later than early Spring 2004, before election year campaigning heats up. It's **imperative** to keep up the congressional contacts now, and for the next few months! Remember; mail letters to Members of Congress to their District/Regional offices, NOT WASH., D.C. to avoid up to 6 week delays in delivery due to the ongoing anthrax screening process of mail to U.S. Government agencies in the U.S. Capitol.

**New Retirees:** The recent "early outs" have produced a virtual stampede of retired members. My home Flint Local saw a dozen 'last punch bunch' alone. **Congratulations** to all of you in your new phase in life. For those newly retired members who carry the APWU Health Plan; be advised that to remain eligible for the APWU Plan, you **must** either remain a full dues-paying member, or join the APWU Retirees Dept. for \$24. per year (\$2. per month deducted from your annuity). All newly retired members are appreciated for your years of loyal Union membership. You are encouraged to remain connected to the Union which has represented your best interests during your postal work lives by becoming a member of the APWU Retirees Dept. Just because you have stepped out of the USPS 'trenches', as long as you depend upon your CSRS/FERS annuities for your livelihood, **YOU'RE NEVER OUT OF THE ARENA!**

**SENATOR STABENOW RESPONDS:** In response to a letter to Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow (D), on **S.623 Premium Conversion** legislation in the U.S. Senate, she responds: *"I share your support for lowering federal employees out-of-pocket health insurance premiums. I am proud to be a cosponsor of S.623, a bill that would allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums."*

*"I am also pleased to be a cosponsor of the Social Security Fairness Act of 2003 (S.349). This bill was introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein on Feb. 11, 2003. The Social Security Fairness Act would repeal the*

*Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provisions (WEP). S.623 and S.349 are currently pending before the Finance Committee. You can count on my continued support of both these bills as the legislative process continues."*

These CSRS/FERS retiree 'bread and butter' issues are equally important for us to write our Members of Congress as it is to write them for their support in opposing the Commission's recommendations. Our battles are in the Halls of Congress in virtually every area. In order to prevail, everyone **must** become involved! By the way; when a Member of Congress responds in support (like Stabenow), it's important that we write a letter of "Thanks". I've sent mine to Senator Debbie. If they respond in the negative; write again asking that they reconsider their position. "The pen is mightier than the sword!"

**AARP CHUMPS SENIORS!** AARP, the organization that purports to represent older Americans, endorsed the Republican version of the Medicare drug prescription "benefit" bill. AARP has tried to justify its betrayal of seniors on Medicare with TV ads and "it's not perfect, but...." condensed crap on their [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) website. If you are a member of AARP, I recommend that you write or visit their website to vent your protest of their sell-out. As a long-time AARP member, I have assured them that they did not represent our best interests, and that I would NOT be renewing my AARP membership.

The G.O.P. Medicare prescription drug benefit bill will unravel Medicare as we know it and cause millions of older Americans to lose health coverage they already have. Bowing to the big drug companies, it does nothing to control costs and only offers a skimpy drug benefit. Here's what the G.O.P. scheme does: \*The Republicans Medicare deal opens the door to privatization by experimenting with a voucher system for Medicare in six test areas covering millions of beneficiaries. This could undermine all of Medicare. \*A \$12 billion special "slush fund" will be set up to increase the number of seniors receiving their Medicare coverage through private plans like HMO's and PPO's, forcing many seniors into private plans and deny them choice of their doctors or hospitals. \*Retirees with employer-provided coverage (like us) could lose that coverage and what we might gain would be much worse. \*Medicare's guarantee of affordable, comprehensive coverage is threatened by provisions that may force Congress to CUT Medicare benefits or INCREASE co-payments. \*For the first time ever, certain seniors will be charged new premiums based on income. \*NOTHING would be done to control the excessive price of prescription drugs that hurts so many retired



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**Retiree Involvement Continued**

and working Americans. These provisions are a sellout to the big drug companies. (Info provided by Union Voice - Working Families e-Activist Network).

**2004 COLA:** The Cost Of Living Allowance increase in our CSRS/FERS annuities will be 2.1%. Ditto for Social Security recipients. I got this info from our local newspaper. The APWU News Service Bulletin, which used to publish quarterly retiree COLA updates, no longer reports retiree COLA's....a real rub with me.

Don't spend that 2.1% just yet! Health plan premiums increases more than gobble it up. Medicare also jumped 13.5%, from \$58. per mo. to \$66.60, an \$8.60 increase. Cuter yet, Social Security Administration advises that when odd cents result (in this instance; .40 cents) they are rounded DOWN to the even dollar amount. In effect, the Medicare premium increase cost us \$9, bucks, with S.S. pocketing \$4.80 next year from every S.S. Medicare recipient. Slick!

????? **WHY** hasn't the APWU organized a massive legislative rally and march on Capitol Hill opposing the Commission's recommendations to Congress?! **WHY** the reluctance? Some argue that legislative rallies aren't effective, while I've heard some Locals say the distance and costs aren't justified. To both I say; **BALONEY!** Here we're busting our humps out in the field in bits and pieces. Great that Detroit and Boston have held rallies, and Local and State opposition activities are gaining some momentum. A national APWU Legislative Rally pounding the Halls of Congress with our message to the Members of Congress is the impetus needed to get Congress' attention and fire up the rank and file at the grassroots level. I would sooner advocate spending our State Retiree Chapter funds for a Washington, D.C. Legislative Rally on our issues as funds far better expended than on a voiceless retiree junket to a national convention in Anaheim, CA!!

**BE STRONG!**

*Al LaBrecque*



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**NBA Report Continued**

J.F.K. placed into effect P.L. 89-301 which gave postal unions recognition. We could have our union dues deducted, health benefits too. Without J.F.K.'s support the APWU, NALC, NRLCA and Mail handlers wouldn't be where we are today. Thanks J.F.K. on behalf of postal workers and all Americans for your great deeds you accomplished in less than three (3) years.

I was just a young punk in 1960 after graduating from high school (some claim I'm just an old punk now). Me and a couple of buddies went to Detroit for the N.H.R.A. Drag Racing Championships and a Tiger game. While we were there in Detroit, J.F.K. kicked off his presidential campaign at the Detroit Labor Day Parade and a big rally. You must remember then as now, the U.A.W. controlled Michigan labor and any Democratic candidate who needed Michigan needed Michigan labor, i.e., UAW. So on Labor Day weekend both J.F.K. and J.L.M. were in town, but for different reasons.

**Seminars & Meetings!**

While I have already commented on the Clerk Craft Conference, I must also address recent Illinois and Michigan conferences. Where are all of the people? The Gaylord, St. Charles and Aurora meetings had good attendance, but not great. With the threats of plant consolidations, early outs, non-early outs, mystery shoppers, limited/light duty, RMD and more problems, it would seem that all members would be more concerned, but I guess not. Just like no one is concerned about COPA, our APWU political action fund. We are still doing better in donations to thwart the President's commission recommendations. The APWU "still" hasn't hit \$1 million dollars, that's shameful, not even \$4.00 a member. No wonder people don't come to seminars and meetings, not even \$4.00 a member. Plus, the retired members still give the most. Without retirees, how much COPA money would we have?

If you haven't given to COPA please do it now. A year from now it will be too late. So give to COPA, come to your seminars/meetings and be interested in your job!

**Last Chance Agreements!**

Okay, I've had it with Last Chance Agreements (LCA's) for attendance. I have mentioned this feeling at meetings and seminars. Why, because they don't work. Unless you really believe and the grievant believes that the LCA conditions can be met and adhered to, don't sign it! The grievant says "I need my job, let me sign it." Ha! Ha!

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(Continued from page 9)  
NBA Report Continued

Then the conditions are violated, another removal is issued, maybe 2 or 3 more, then we get it at our level. What's an Arbitrator going to do? You've got it, deny the removal. Now my theory is let the Arbitrator give the grievant a "last chance," maybe, just maybe the Arbitrator's decision and final ruling will make an impact, all of the others are just like treading the water before the great white shark eats you! So, before you as steward agrees to a LCA you better believe the grievant can comply, if not don't agree, let the arbitrator decide.

### Loss of Friends Continues

The APWU continues to lose good Illinois friends. Birkie Hillis, President of the GEM Area Local passed. GEM area is in the Alton area east of the river. Birkie had over 60 years as a union activist.. We will All miss him and the green monster, too!

Additionally, two former NPU/APWU officers passed. John Mackay, the first President of the breakaway National Postal Union and David Silvergleid, the successor or President of the NPU and first Executive Vice President of the APWU, both passed away in October. God bless them all for their ongoing support for the working class for so many years. If it wasn't for members like Burkie, John and Dave, where would we all be today?

### E.L.V.S. not the Movie!

Hey, Will Ferrell is the star of ELF. E.L.V.S. is an entry level validation study. This is a job analysis being conducted for bargaining unit employees, clerks, mail handlers, and letter carriers. Remember the APWU doesn't support any of these unilateral surveys. If you are instructed to report somewhere to complete this survey, remember time and mileage should be paid. While I can't tell you to **not** follow instructions to participate, I can tell you the APWU doesn't support any surveys are not jointly agreed to by the USPS and APWU. So Elvis may not be alive, but be aware of E.L.V.S. These surveys are only to validate our current downsizing and not help anyone keep their current job.

### Excessing

Excessing continues. Northern Illinois District has recently designated offices to lose 92 full-time clerks. No one has been excessed, but these withholdings certainly affect conversion to full-time regular. With the 350 mile withholding for the 400 Chicago clerks is taken into consideration, there won't be conversion for quite some time

in Great Lakes.

### Sports & Stuff

As I wrote this article, Ohio State and Michigan will battle with the Blue coming out on top in a big win. Northern Illinois won't get a Bowl Bid, but Michigan State will . . . . go figure.

In basketball, the Spartans will win the Big Ten. Illinois will be a flop.

The Bears and Lions still suck. My recent prediction of the Left Coast, Oakland and San Francisco is now modified to Kansas City and Dallas. Go figure.

Hey, Ozzie is in Chicago. When is his wife getting a gig on WGN? Can the Sox and Cubs actually play in the World Series?

Now for some good eating:

### **Maui Pasta Salad**

3 cups cooked spiral pasta  
2 cups snow peas  
1 cup sliced carrots (small)  
1 cup sliced cucumbers (narrow)  
1 cup pineapple juice  
½ reduced-calorie Italian dressing  
¼ cup chopped cilantro or parsley  
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Chill 15 minutes to ½ hour and serve.

### **Rice Pudding**

¾ cup sugar  
3 eggs  
1 quart milk  
½ teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
½ cup (raw measure) cooked rice  
1 tablespoon butter

Mix sugar, salt and cinnamon and eggs. Scald milk and butter. Add cooked rice. Combine two mixtures (can be done directly in baking pan). Bake in 9-inch square pan placed in a pan of water at 300 degrees for one hour or until knife comes out clean.

*Jerry*

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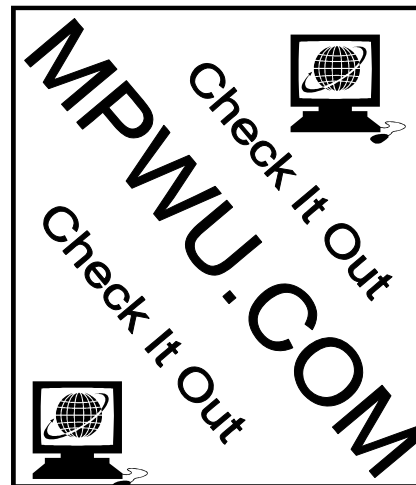


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Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

In addition, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.



**Upcoming Events to Plan For:**

- March 4 - 7 - Area 7 & 9 District and Editors' Meeting, Best Western Midway Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI
- April 29 - May 1, 2004 - Biennial Constitutional Convention, Holiday Inn South & Convention Center, Lansing, MI
- August 19 - 27, 2004 - APWU Biennial Convention, Los Angeles, CA
- November 2004 - District Meeting, Traverse City, MI
- May 2005 - MPWU Educational Convention, Radisson Hotel, Kalamazoo, MI



**Area 7 & 9 District Meeting  
along with an Editors' Training/Meeting**

March 4-7, 2004  
Best Western Midway Hotel  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Rates: \$65 - Single/\$75 - Double

Registration: \$50.00

For the Editors, with the upcoming National Elections for the APWU, along with the Political elections, Tony Carbone, National PPA President, has agreed to be on hand for one day to present a class dealing with Federal Elections and Your Union Publication. Please make every effort to attend.

Contact the Best Western Midway Hotel Directly by calling: 616-942-2550 (or 1-888-280-0081). We must have reservations made for this event Not Later Than January 15, 2004.

If rooms aren't available, overflow will be handled at the Comfort Inn (next door (across the Parking Lot)). Contact them directly at 616-957-2080 (or 800-638-7949).

Please tell them you are with the Michigan Postal Workers Union to receive the negotiated rate.

**2004 Biennial Constitutional  
Convention**

**April 29 - May 1, 2004  
Holiday Inn South/Conference Center  
Lansing, Michigan**

	<i>Standard Room</i>	<i>American Package</i>	<i>American Package</i>
	<i>Rates (per night) (2 nights)</i>		<i>(3 Nights)</i>
Single	\$83.25	\$293.73	\$415.47
Double	\$94.35	\$443.16	\$614.49
Triple	\$105.45	\$592.59	\$813.51
Quad	\$116.55	\$742.02	\$1012.53

**Registration:** \$50.00

Convention Call will be forthcoming from the Executive Secretary.

***Start to work on your Resolutions NOW!***



*From the Executive Board of the  
Michigan Postal Workers Union -  
- To You and Yours -  
Happy Holidays*



For More Information Regarding the District Meeting and Constitutional Convention, please check the website at <http://www.mpwu.com>

Return to APWU/MPWU  
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