



Michigan Messenger

AFFILIATED WITH: AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO, APWU POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION, MICHIGAN STATE AFL-CIO & MICHIGAN LABOR PRESS

Volume 34, Issue 137

July / August 2008 Issue

Presidential Report



Gary VanHoogstraten
President

I know as I write this article that we are just in the beginning stages of summer. I wish to all our brothers and sisters and families, a safe and enjoyable one.

As I stated, summer has approached but it is not too early to think about the elections in November. There are a number of Senate and House seats that will be important for us and we should make sure we get our friends elected. The Michigan State AFL-CIO and our National union will pass on any and all information you need to help you make an informed decision on who should lead this great country. The National Executive Board has endorsed Barack Obama for President. President Burrus in his May/June issue of the Postal Worker magazine has given us some background on the candidates and the reason for their endorsement. Secretary-Treasurer Stapleton in the same issue expresses some of John McCain's views. No one can tell you what to do or who to vote for but it is the Union's responsibility to ensure that all available information is provided to the members so they can make their choice. But we do all have to remem-

ber that we MUST VOTE. You can also go to the candidate's web sites to get their views also.

Another subject that was just launched today by the Michigan State AFL-CIO is "Health Care for America Now." The drive to win quality health care for all, is one of the voters' key issues this fall. It received a boost today when a new coalition, including the AFL-CIO unveiled plans for a nationwide campaign to build support for health care reform when a new president and congress takes office in 2009. AFL-CIO Executive Vice President, Arlene Holt Baker, said: "Working families are suffering mightily under health care that cost too much, covers too little, excludes too many and is getting worse. Both workers and our employers need relief soon. If we fail to enact comprehensive reform in the next congress, employment-based health benefits, the backbone of our health system, will disappear in short order." She also said that Unions are campaigning to Turn America Around on health care and will continue to do so until the job is done. We salute the new coalition health Care for America NOW and we are thrilled at the prospect of working closely with such our allies to fight for change across the length and breadth of America. During

Congress's summer recess in August, local and state Union leaders and activists will meet with key representatives, senators and candidates in home district meetings around the country to stress the need for action on health care reform when a new congress and president takes office. If you need any additional information you may go to the Michigan State AFL-CIO web site: miaflcio.org and there will be continued information available for you.

The next issue of the Michigan Messenger will have articles from next month's National Convention. I look forward seeing all the delegates from Michigan standing tall by our banner and representing all of the members.

Until Next Time,



The Long and Short of It



Michael A. Long
Editor

Thank You

While re-reading my last article, and trying to come up with something for this edition, it struck me that I left a gap in my prior article while I was describing the convention here in Grand Rapids. I apologize for this oversight. While I did thank the host local, I was remiss in not thanking the members who did an outstanding job either by helping out in the hospitality room, or offering their time and assistance in other avenues cumulating in the outstanding execution of the convention.

I was also remiss if I didn't thank the delegates for their trust in re-electing me for another term as your editor. As I stated at the convention, I hold this position in a very high regard, and try to work diligently in ensuring that the membership receives information as rapidly as possible and in a format that is easy and pleasant to read. Please let me know anytime if you see some changes that might be able to be made to assist in this regard.

Quandary

I will admit that this question poises me in somewhat of a quandary regarding the Michigan Messenger and how it is delivered to the membership. In an effort to help reduce costs to the state, I would like to poise a question to the membership. However, it is this question that is cause of concern. Firstly, we are in the mailing business. Our livelihood depends on us using the Postal Service; however, I want your feedback and your input. Secondly, the MPWU already posts the Michigan Messenger on our website for you to

view, as soon as the printer sends it to us. I want to know which way do you read this publication. Do you read the physical copy you receive in the mail; or do you read the one on-line? Please send me an e-Mail or a letter to the address listed on the last page with your input/answer. The answer to this question will translate possibly into a future question regarding possible cost savings.

Your Post Office

I would like to start recognizing your post office in the Michigan Messenger and/or on-line; however, I need your help. With the high cost of gas, and other restrictions, there is no way that I could come and visit your office personally. It is with this that I would like your help in sending me information about your office (along with a couple of pictures to be used.) I will attempt to put them in the paper, or at a minimum establish a new link on the website for all of your offices to be seen. If you would like to assist me in this endeavor, I would need, at a minimum, the following information:

1. Name of the Office?
2. How Many People do you have in your office (with a breakdown of how many APWU craft members you have)?
3. How Many People (customers) do you serve?
4. How Long has the Post Office existed in your town? If it was moved from one place to another, that would be good too.
5. Does your city have any famous landmarks?
6. If you can provide a photo, and since most Post Offices have changed buildings, please see if you can provide a photo of any of the older bldgs too.

Until Next, Yours in Solidarity,

Mike

Veteran's Report



John Smeeckens
Veterans Director

THANK YOU

I would like to take a moment to thank all the members who were in attendance at the MPWU State Convention, in Grand Rapids in May, for your support in keeping me on as the Veterans' Director. I

hope that I will be able to pass along some valuable information to my brother and sister Veterans', and their families, concerning their rights and benefits that are owed to them, for the time you served this great country of ours. If you have any questions concerning your benefits please contact me so I can get you a booklet about benefits offered to Veterans' and their families. Thank You for all your support.

THE NEW G.I. BILL

You heard that right. The new Montgomery GI Bill has a whopping 20% increase over last years rates. Money wise that means more than \$220.00 a month. A full time student rate of \$1,321.00 equates to about \$47,500.00 for a 36 month program. Plus time frames have changed to allow more time for completion, transfer of benefit to Dependent family members. To get more info, contact your County Veterans Officer, or go on line to the Department of Veterans Affairs. If you are still eligible, you may want to look into this. Not necessarily to change jobs, but to enhance your knowledge and ability for your present position, or to just keep up with your kids!!!

NEW RATINGS BOARD

Denied benefits when you got out of the service or disagree with the disability ratings when you were discharged as unfit for duty? Now you can apply to have those ratings reviewed by the new Physical Disability Board of Review. A new board to reassess the accuracy and fairness of disability ratings assigned to discharged troops has been created by The Defense

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)
Veterans Report Continued

Department. Several task forces and studies cited differences in the way the military departments assigned disability ratings for similar conditions, with the Army leading the way for assigning the lowest ratings. Don't forget to see your County Veterans Officer for answers to your questions about the New Ratings Board.

MONEY

I thought that would get your attention. If you know anyone who is a Veteran or a dependant and is receiving benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for disability, pension, or survivors' benefits let them know they only have until October 15, 2008 to file for an Economic Stimulus Payment. They need to contact their County Veterans Officer or a Disabled American Veterans Service Officer. As many as 1 in 4 disabled Veterans and retirees have not yet filed a claim for the economic stimulus payments.

THE STATE FAIR

The State Fair this year will run from August 22, through September 01, 2008.

Armed Services Day will be on August 31, and they will be honoring all Military both Past and Present (free admission with I. D. or in uniform) all day long. There will be a Veteran of the year, a Memorial service, a parade for all, and numerous other things of interest to Veterans'. Call 313-369-8310 for more information.

POW/MIA RALLY

On September 19, 2008 in Lansing at 11:00AM EDT, there will be a Rally to recognize those who gave all and those who are still giving, and to show support for a concurrent resolution urging Congress to appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate POW issues. Activities will take place at the State Capital in Lansing on the East Lawn near

the Main Entrance.

CRSC ELIGIBILITY

Congress has extended eligibility for CRSC (combat related special compensation) to include any military retirees with combat related disabilities whose retired pay is reduced by their VA disability compensation, even if they served fewer than 20 years. The FY08 National Defense Authorization Act added retirees who served fewer than 20 years, retired, and have combat related disabilities to those eligible for CRSC. The law change went into effect on January 01, 2008. To apply for CRSC, retirees must still provide documentation that shows a casual link between a current VA disability and a combat related event. The new updated claim form, dated April 2008, is number DD2860. You can call 1-866-281-3254 for help, or you can go on-line to get help tools at <http://www.crsc.army.mil>.

NEWAYGO DEDICATION

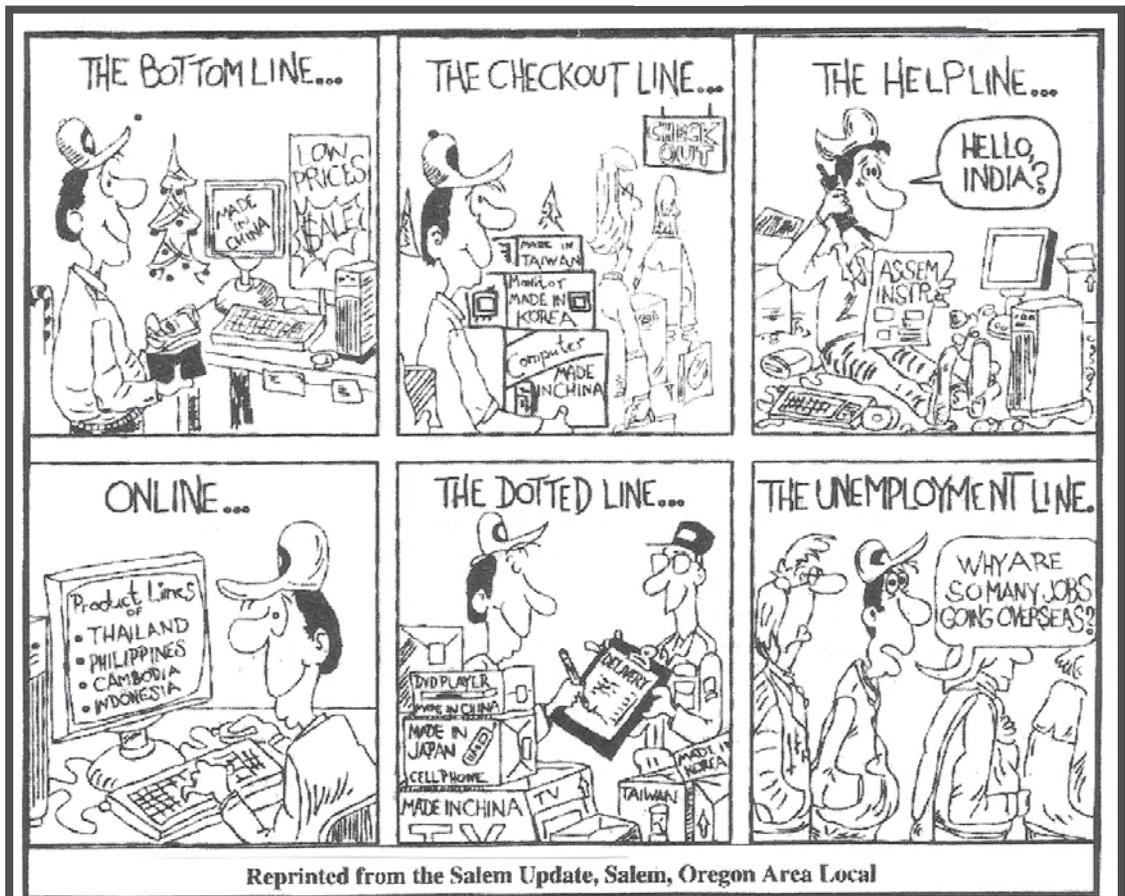
The James R. Sherwood Chapter #18 of The Military Order of The Purple Heart, fully realized their efforts for their hard work in seeing a Purple

Heart Monument in Newaygo. The hard work of fund raising, for this type of accomplishment, is the reward of seeing the monument uncovered at the dedication ceremonies. This all took place on June 14, 2008, Flag Day. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

R.S.V.P.

It stands for Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. This program has been set up in Macomb County and their looking for Veterans' of all wars to talk about their experiences for the National Veterans' History Project. Numerous transcripts and tapes will be recorded and sent to the Library of Congress where they will be made a part of the project's permanent collection. Many politicians from different County areas are aware of the program and can probably get more information if you're interested, so contact them or your County Veterans Office for an update. This National Project wants to hear from Veterans' from all over.

John



Reprinted from the Salem Update, Salem, Oregon Area Local

Clerk Craft Report



Richard Blake
Clerk Craft Director

MPWU Constitutional Convention - I'd like to express my appreciation and gratitude for being re-elected as your MPWU Clerk Craft Director. It's been a challenging and rewarding position, and I've especially enjoyed having the opportunity to work with Locals from around the state on a wide variety of issues, such as crossing crafts, reversions, casuals, transfers, and of course discipline. I hope to have the opportunity to continue working with stewards and officers from around Michigan.

On the other hand, I was pretty disappointed that the Convention didn't address, in any meaningful way, the problem of finances - specifically, the issue of Locals (all of whom are required, per the APWU National Constitution, to be affiliated with their State organization) who pay their MPWU affiliation dues whenever they feel like it, and who pay whatever they feel like paying. As the second-longest-serving MPWU officer (behind President VanHoogstraten), it disturbs me to see the MPWU being forced to cut back on our educational efforts due to the increasingly unpredictable nature of MPWU's finances from one month to the next. As Clerk Craft Director, I've seen first-hand what happens when smaller Locals aren't able to properly train their stewards and officers (primarily due to the cost of such training). This does not mean that these stewards or officers aren't competent or motivated, only that they haven't been properly trained. One personal anecdote really opened my eyes about the important role of MPWU in protecting the rights of our members in smaller associate offices; I had been discussing a particular Clerk-related contractual issue with a fairly new President of a

small Local. During the discussion, I mentioned something along the lines of "there was a class on this subject at the Multi-Craft Conference in Las Vegas last year - did you take some other class instead?" Their response was "Are you kidding? Our Local can't afford to send ANYBODY to the Multi-Craft Conference, so it really doesn't matter WHAT classes were taught". To which I then asked, "okay, but this was a really important class - where do you anticipate getting this type of information?", and they replied "From you, the MPWU Clerk Craft Director, at MPWU Educational events". What happens if MPWU can't afford to send its' Craft Directors to the Multi-Craft Conference in 2009 due to the unpredictability of our finances? What happens when MPWU can't afford to hold a District Meeting in a particular geographical area, depriving the members in that area of an opportunity for critically-important education at a manageable cost? Are we taking the position that our members in smaller offices should be willing to accept second-class Union representation - not due to incompetence but simply due to a lack of affordable training? I don't presume to have all the answers to this problem, but I definitely hope that MPWU makes some significant progress in addressing this issue soon.

Excessing and residual vacancies - over the past few years I've been totally amazed at the extent to which Clerk duty assignments seem to "disappear" upon becoming vacant, and the adverse effect this has on employees in offices experiencing excessing, as well as on employees seeking to transfer. As an example, in almost every recent instance where there's been excessing out of offices in the Southeast Michigan District, the list of "withheld" positions into which these employees might be excessed (or into which someone might choose to "senior opt") didn't include one single job in the Detroit District, yet the "response" from Detroit District management has always been "we don't have any residual vacancies in this District", which is just beyond ridiculous. The problem has been that our stewards and officers simply haven't been aggressive and thorough enough in protecting every last job within our juris-

diction, and there's really no excuse for that. As an example, let's say that management has decided that they want to excess four Clerks out of Huntington Woods (a Detroit suburb just a couple miles north of the Detroit city limits, but part of the Southeast Michigan District). Management presents the employees in Huntington Woods with a list of "withheld" positions in Flint and Port Huron, telling them that "these are your choices". But what if there are actually residual vacancies in Northville, or Plymouth, or in Detroit city stations (but management feels that these offices "don't really need people", so they just refuse to include those vacancies on the list)? If a Clerk who's about to get excessed out of Huntington Woods lives in Ferndale, for example, the difference between commuting every day from Ferndale to Flint and commuting every day from Ferndale to Northville could easily be \$500 a month or more at today's gas prices. What if one of the senior Clerks in Huntington Woods actually lives in Plymouth, and would love to "senior opt" to the Plymouth Post Office, taking their seniority with them and reducing their commuting expenses at the same time? Shouldn't those options be made available to these Clerks, particularly since one of the "principles" in Article 12 is that "dislocation and inconvenience to employees in the regular work force shall be kept to a minimum"? As a Clerk officer, I feel that we've focused too much on "bargaining" with management to keep the number of employees excessed to a minimum (which is a worthwhile goal, for sure, but not the only goal), while not putting nearly enough effort into "beating the bushes" to find out exactly what vacant duty assignments are out there. We really need to do a better job of working together to insure that employees affected by excessing truly have their "dislocation and inconvenience" kept to a minimum.

In Solidarity,

Richard

Retiree Involvement



Al LaBrecque
MPWU Retirees President

The Highest Governing Body of our APWU is meeting for our National Constitutional Convention, August 18-22 in Las Vegas. State and Local Delegates will be the voting members of this Union's highest governing body, making serious decisions on the direction of our Union over the next two years and beyond. Locals and States have submitted resolutions on a variety of issues which will be reported to the Convention for delegate consideration. The Constitution Committee reports on proposals to amend the APWU Constitution & By-Laws, which is the Union's governing document. Debate on these resolutions is often the most contentious, and whether or not these proposals are adopted, have the greatest impact on the direction of the Union for, at least, the next two years.

As members of the APWU Retirees' Dept., some 40,000 strong, we have but five voices and votes in Convention through our five elected National Retiree Delegates, and that's only IF they step up to speak on resolutions on retiree issues. That's a potential of five voices and votes among some 3,000 active Local and state delegates from all 50 States, Territories, and Locals across the nation. It is absolutely imperative that our active Sister and Brother delegates are informed on the retiree issues that will be deliberated and voted either up or down. The retiree membership depends on you, the active member delegates, to be our advocates in Convention!

Therefore, **APWU National Convention delegates, please listen up!** There will be several

critical resolutions on retiree membership and Retirees' Dept. issues that will be put before you. Two of those resolutions were submitted to, and adopted by, the MPWU State Convention. I am asking... NO; I'm pleading; MPWU State delegates and Michigan Local delegates to the Convention to stand strong behind these resolutions. There will also be several other resolutions on serious retiree issues submitted by other states and Locals that our Michigan delegation must pay strict attention to, and either strongly support, or reject. You are our voice!

To that end, I am outlining those resolutions and issues that I'm aware of, which will be reported to Convention delegates for your consideration, and my position on each. Let me begin with our Michigan State resolutions:

Resolved: "Establish that; APWU Retirees' Department Conferences shall be conducted in conjunction with APWU All-Craft Conferences held in years between National Conventions."

This is not a Constitutional amendment, but establishes APWU policy. The Retirees' Dept. conducted its first-ever Conference in conjunction with the All-Craft Conferences in Nov., '07. It was highly productive! However, APWU Pres. Burrus declared that; when APWU National Convention delegates established the All-Craft Conferences via an adopted convention resolution,

that there were NO provisions to include the Retirees' Dept., or any APWU Department, and would NOT be permitted to do so again unless authorized by this Union's highest governing body! The All-Craft Conferences are not constitutionally mandated, but is "policy" established by delegates at a previous Convention. Therefore, taking Pres. Burrus up on his stern admonition, this resolution has been submitted to the Union's highest governing body. The arguments for adopting the above resolve are to be found in the "Whereas". It is respectfully requested that our delegates be prepared to step up to the microphone in support of this critical resolution! Failure to adopt would be a serious step backwards!

Resolved: "Article 16, Section 2(I) of the APWU National Constitution and By-Laws, on line 2; change the words; "shall receive forty percent (40%)" to; "shall receive sixty-five percent (65%)" of the annual retiree per capita tax per member of that local chapter".

Again, the "Whereas" explain the necessity of increasing local retiree chapter operating funds. This proposal reflects another resolution that follows, regarding the extremely thin financial margins local and state retiree chapters are expected to operate on. There is universal consensus that retiree chapters are financially strapped and struggle to make ends meet. At the same time, I have to be realistic that increasing the rebate from national from 40% to 65% is going to be tough to sell. It will be interesting to see how the Constitution Committee reports this resolution; either concurrence or non-concurrence. They could "modify" the resolve to a more palatable 45% or even 50%, or delegates could amend from the convention floor.

The Pittsburgh Area Local Retiree Chapter has indicated three resolutions are being submitted to this Convention as Constitutional amendments. The first also deals with financial rebates to local and state retiree chapters.

Resolved: "Amend Article 3, Section 4 (c) to increase retiree per capita by one (1) dollar per month, this increase be

(Continued on page 6)



(Continued from page 5)
Retiree Involvement Continued

passed on in whole to existing local and state retiree chapters where they now exist or may be organized in the future. Where there are no retiree chapters in existence, the one (1) dollar increase shall be retained by the Retiree Department in an organizing fund, to be disbursed solely for organizing activities by the Retiree Department".

This would increase Retirees' Dept. member's annual dues from \$24. per year to \$36., a 50% dues increase. While I have every respect for Brother John Richards, author of this proposal and current elected Eastern Region Retiree Delegate, and completely understand the reasons for the critical need to provide additional funding to local and state chapters (as I'll relate later), I cannot in good conscience support a dues increase on the backs of our 40,000 retired members. My deep concern is that it very well could be concurred upon by the Constitution Committee and adopted by the delegates in Convention because it will not cost the active membership or Union a single dime! 'No skin off their nose!' What do retiree members get for their \$24. annual dues now?! Not much! Six APWU national magazines a year, a 'nickel & dime' \$5,000. accidental death & dismemberment policy, and incessant appeals for COPA contributions! Until and unless retiree members get more bang for the buck, which has been consistently rejected convention after convention, a dues increase is not justified. I also fear the consequences of a dues increase. Since this proposal was floated, I've had numerous retiree members state that if this increase is adopted, they will cancel their membership. The result would be extremely counter-productive in my view.

The "carrot" to make the increase more palatable is to build an organizing fund. While that sounds good, I would point out that the current dues structure of \$24. per year far exceeds rebate disbursements to chapters by at least a million dollars to conduct extensive organizing. Increasing dues for that purpose is absolutely not necessary. Sure, I'd dearly love to receive \$1. per month per member of our chapter, but I simply

cannot justify it at our current level of services to the retiree membership. With only 36 Local and 4 State Retiree Chapters who would profit from this proposal, the remaining majority of unrepresented members-at-large (MAL's) would be paying the freight with no increase in services above what they already receive. This would amount to an unfair tax to profit the few. I sincerely hope our Convention delegates are paying attention when this proposal comes up for debate and vote to reject. It would take a two-thirds majority to adopt.

I would, however, encourage delegates to fully support the following two resolutions submitted by Brother Richards, and Pittsburgh:

Resolved: "Amend Article 8, Section 11(b) as follows: The Retiree Delegates to the Union's Convention salary shall be one (1) dollar per year. Whenever these Delegates attend National Conventions, State Conventions, and/or other meetings as retiree representatives, they shall be paid at the current rate for eight (8) hours per day at the level and step held at the time of retirement, and shall be reimbursed for all expenses incurred for attendance at conventions and meetings".

This proposal is very similar to resolutions we have submitted in previous Conventions, which were soundly rejected by both the Constitution Committees and delegates that proposed fair compensation for the five elected National Retiree Delegates. National Retiree Delegates to the '96, '98, and 2000 Conventions were compensated at Level 5 Step 0. That ended with the '02 and '04 Conventions when the APWU administration determined the elected National Retiree Delegates were only to be reimbursed for "necessary expenses". That's patently wrong! That administration decision was a direct slap in the face to our elected representatives of

the Retirees' Dept. This resolution would correct this inequity by establishing a fair salary structure in the APWU Constitution. I urge our delegates to fully support it as the right thing to do.

A companion resolution, also to recognize the significance of their service, and the fact National Retiree Delegates are elected by the Retirees' Dept. membership in their respective Regions in our national Union elections, deserve to be treated equitably by the APWU, is also similar to resolutions we have submitted in the past and have had rejected, deserves our delegate's active support:

Resolved: "Article 12, Section 7 of the Constitution is amended by deleting the word 'and' on the first line and substituting in lieu thereof the word 'including'," and be it further

Resolved: "For all intents and purposes set forth here and elsewhere in the Constitution and Bylaws, the five (5) Retiree National Convention Delegates shall be considered and recognized as officers of the Union including being sworn into office with the other elected officers."

A little background. The five elected National Retiree Delegates have been treated like the "poor red-headed step-child" by the APWU leadership. They have not even been permitted to be sworn in with the other elected national officers at the APWU installation cere-

(Continued on page 7)



(Continued from page 6)

Retiree Involvement Continued

monies. This is nothing less than an insult to the elected delegates and entire Retirees' Dept. membership who elect their delegates to represent our best interests. This is a wrong that begs to be righted, and our active delegates to this Convention have the opportunity to speak up and end this discriminatory policy.

These are the major retiree related resolutions I'm aware of at this time. There may be other resolutions, possibly one out of California permitting "full dues-paying" retirees to be Convention delegates with a voice and vote. Of 40,000 Retirees' Dept. members, less than 500 are full dues-paying members of the APWU. Full dues-paying retirees, many of whom are elected national, state, or local officers, already have the opportunity to be elected delegates. Until ALL retiree members are accorded eligibility to be an elected delegate from their respective Local or State Chapter, this resolution does little for the vast majority of the retiree membership. Except for the 5 elected National Retiree Delegates in a Convention of some 3,000 active delegates, we remain voiceless and voteless. That's why I make this appeal to our active delegates to this Convention to be our voice and vote advocates.

Opting Out. As State Chapter President and automatic delegate to the pre-National Convention Retirees' Dept. Conference Aug. 16-17, I've made the difficult decision not to attend. Two primary reasons. For my own ability to attend, I'm currently experiencing physical issues with walking even intermediate distances, and the walking involved with air travel, in hotels and the Convention Center would be intolerable. Even if I could run a 26 mile marathon, it's my decision that our current level of finances would be almost entirely depleted with this junket to Las Vegas. Further, if I was to select an alternate delegate from the State Chapter, it would simply be fiscally irresponsi-

ble. The overwhelming majority of the State Chapter E-Board concurs with this decision. Our Chapter Constitution regarding delegates to Conferences, Conventions, etc., stipulates; "finances permitting".

As outlined in resolution proposals above, Local and State Chapter funds are very limited. I'm obligated to spend and choose responsibly where those funds are best spent. In 2009 we will be attending the MPWU Education Convention, which includes our annual State Chapter E-Board meeting and education opportunities to better serve our members. IF this 2008 National Convention is wise enough to adopt our resolution to conduct APWU Retirees' Dept. Conferences in conjunction with the off-year All-Craft Conferences, we should have sufficient funds to send one or two delegates. I've attended every pre-National Convention Retirees' Dept. Conference since their inception. The Conference held with the All-Crafts last Nov. was far more substantive and worth the cost and effort. Convention conferences had little value other than debating resolutions the Convention would be considering, and then so-called "votes" held little or no weight. They've basically been "dog & pony shows" and window dressing to give active convention delegates the illusion that the #1 COPA contributors (retirees), are included in the decision making process. Having no credentials to participate as a voting delegate, I left for home after the pre-Convention Conferences anyway. We didn't have the funds to stay the 5-day Convention, and I refuse to 'sit in the back of the bus' simply to provide the Union window dressing.



The most value I've experienced from attending pre-convention Retirees' Dept. Conferences, is an opportunity to attempt to lobby active delegates to support our issues on the Convention floor where we have no voice or vote save the 5 National Retiree Delegates. Even then, only one, sometimes two Retiree Delegates ever step up to the plate, which has been deeply disturbing to me. When I was Central Region Delegate in '96 & '98, when Western Region Delegate, Byron Denton, and I teamed up, and Byron stood pretty much alone in 2000 and 2004, we had to depend on the active delegates to support our positions. After a lot of debate, struggle, and a lot of rejection, we made "some" progress. The last, and most significant, was the 2004 Constitutional amendment to elect our Department Director, and that took 3 Conventions to accomplish. I might add that it was not well received by the APWU leadership, and I can expand on that if necessary!

One can always hope that with an elected Department Director and two newly elected National Retiree Delegates at this Convention, and active delegates informed on retiree resolutions; the retiree membership can expect positive results this time around. I'm counting on our Michigan delegates and traditionally friendly delegates to this Convention to be our voice. While we may not be physically present, be assured we will be watching with great interest. Be further assured we will ultimately respond in kind!

Requiem I learned, after my last column, that former Eastern Region National Retiree Delegate, **John Deeley**, died as the result of a tragic automobile accident earlier this year. Brother Deeley served as Retiree Delegate from the 2000 National Convention through the 2006 Convention in Philadelphia. He was also a candidate for the position of Director, APWU Retirees' Dept. in Union's the 2007 national officer elections. "Eternal rest grant unto him 'O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon him. Amen."

Be Strong!

Al

NBA Report / Turney Talks



Linda Turney
Central Region
NBA—
Clerk Craft

Limited Duty Employees doing Clerk Craft Work

I just got back from vacation to find out that I won a case of first impression out of Flint Michigan. As with all arbitrations it is the bottom of the pyramid that really makes the winning possible. This time the credit goes to Northwest Annex (Flint Michigan) steward, Debbie Sowden. If there were a steward of the year award, I would have to give it to her. She is a new steward and this was her first arbitration. I was able to convince the arbitrator that Debbie argued the new contract language in Article 13.4.M. at the step 2 meeting and in the Additions and Corrections (A&C) even though management claimed they did not discuss Article 13.4.M at the step 2 meeting not did they receive the A&C at step 3.

The Union's argument included essentials to convincing an arbitrator on a limited duty carrier (LDC) doing clerk craft work. We argued (1.) required advance written notice to the Union President (2.) A violation of the pecking order contained in ELM 546.141 which requires a continuing duty on management's part to review and monitor whether work is available in the injured carrier's craft (3.) management worked the carrier to the detriment of clerks.

In this particular case, there was no dispute that the LDC was doing clerk craft work and there were duties in the LDC job description (that was requested by and put into the file by the steward) that were within the carrier craft.

This case was interesting because it also required the arbitrator to determine contentions concerning "new evidence" which was argued by both management and union. The arbitrator ruled in the

union's favor regarding new argument because there was no mention in the written record despite the requirement of Article 15.2 step 2 (f) and Article 15.2 step 3 (c). On the other hand, because of the credible testimony of steward Sowden that Article 13.4.M. was talked about at the step 2 meeting and the written record that this argument was included in the A&C management's "new evidence" argument and a step 4 settlement which states that a "additional facts and contentions not previously set forth in the record as appealed from Step 2 may be presented for the first time at step 3" asserted that the Union's evidence was properly before the arbitrator.

Thanks to President Debbie Lutz for all her assistance in putting on this case as well as to Debbie Sowden for requesting and putting all the necessary documents in the file and the clerks at Northwest annex for your patience and willingness to come forward to testify.

Onward Obama

Congratulations to Illinois Senator Obama. Obama's coalition of young voters and black Americans has been powerful and inspirational. The turnout of Democrats has stopped the idea that no one pays attention to politics.

Even though I am from Illinois and have been an Obama supporter, I understand those middle aged white women who voted for Hillary. The estrogen alert that now is claiming that females are going over to support John McCain I hope is overblown. The idea that Democratic women (or men for that matter) would sell out to the right wing which has been no friend of labor or women is suggesting that we are all emotional nuts. John McCain is the party of Clarence Thomas even after Anita Hill testified. Progressive women's groups have tagged McCain as weak on workplace bias and equal-pay guarantees. He opposes acknowledging the role of women in combat. McCain held up approval of over-the-counter emergency contraception. In 1993, McCain voted to gut and suspend FMLA unless there were provisions to protect big business. McCain says that NAFTA was a good idea and that jobs

lost will never be recovered. McCain voted for CAFTA and wants to expand it. These are some reasons that women voters and union voters should not switch their allegiance to McCain.

I agree with CBS anchor, Katie Couric, on the tone and coverage of the Democratic Party fight that one of the great lessons of the campaign is the continued, and accepted, role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media. While we have heard no media reports of Hillary being taunted by crowds that scream "go home and do the laundry" or "iron my shirts", these taunts are unbelievably true and went unreported by the media. We do know that if Hillary had invented fire, she would have been accused of being a pyromaniac. For American women and men enraged by the fact that women have been caricatured differently, commented upon differently and held to a different standard must remember that at the end of the day, you cannot trust McCain.

Voters who were such strong supporters of Hillary should cross over and support Obama. They need to educate Obama in acknowledging Hillary's contributions as she bowed out of the election. Hillary supporters need to educate Obama that he should never again refer to a grown female reporter as "sweetie". If Obama reaches out to concerns of women, then it will send a signal that he truly is standing for change. Obama should focus on equal pay, universal child care, reproductive rights, the women warriors in Iraq and the empty purses of the working class. A black man who can speak to these issues and about all the ways that women and working class people have carried this country will also represent real change to all Americans.

Linda

**ANITA
HILL
APWU**

Editorial

By: Bret Whitmore

Reprinted from: The Fargo Tour Guide (originally from Local 760 of Rapid City SD).

A Special Note to "The Expert"

Hey you! Yeah, you! You know who I am talking to. You're the one who's been around this place for a while, maybe even getting a little closer to retirement but you haven't quite ridden this gravy train long enough, so you probably know how a few things work on the floor. You've talked to a lot of people about it already. Yeah, you've even done some time with the Union, so you think you know a thing or two about sides. Of course, you've got an opinion about that too. You think you've taken your turn, and maybe you have, so now you're an "expert." Yah, now you know who I'm talking about don't you?!...

Let me remind you. The union does not exist to be your personal "perk generator"! Stewards don't work for you personally. They work for Everyone and All At The Same Time. If your steward doesn't catch one of the dozens of contractual infractions that happen around here each month, of course it behooves us to give them a

polite reminder. Likewise, if you disagree with something your Steward or Union is doing in general, attend a meeting a little more than once or twice a year to discuss it! But the Officers and Stewards are the ones pulling the double shifts here, not you! They do their regular jobs, plus they give up whatever is left of their personal time to spend hours for the Union when they too would much rather be home relaxing after work. They're only human. Yet, they're the ones with the noses to the grindstone of Our Contract, investigating a grievance, writing up the paperwork for you, and then doing the least favorite part of all; getting into a supervisor's face, over and over again, for you. And for what?...They do all the hard work, without the least bit of adequate acknowledgement while you sit there smug and dissatisfied that they must've missed something. They didn't get you what you wanted. Obviously they don't know how much time you put in, and that you deserve better.

to special treatment or special consideration for every little problem. Our union dues do not give any of us the right to request a new steward be hired that suits us better. Stewards are always in the line of fire, so they have to fight the best way they can, and sometimes, they have to pick their battles. Even if the contract was truly violated, the Steward is powerless to guarantee us anything, other than that they must do their best to represent Our Contract and your case to the boss. **It's the boss who makes our lives miserable, not the union!!!**

So, quietly and sincerely, go thank you Steward. They fought in your place. Don't (complain) about them behind their back. Don't bad-mouth them to others. Don't say you could do a better job, unless you are prepared to motivate (yourself) and take the next Steward job that opens. If you don't like your Officers, don't just run your mouth, run for office! The two toughest jobs in the Post Office are: Having to fight bad management as a Steward or Officers; and having to fight the rumors and lack of trust of your own Union members. Nobody, unless they are actually serving in that office now, at this exact time, under these present circumstances, against these current managers, can know about how tough the job of working in today's Union can be.

Our Union's fight is against contract violations by MANAGEMENT. Every caustic remark you make against other members of Our Union saps energy from that fight. Your comments undermine all our hard work and just make bad management's job easier. Personality differences are one thing; take care of that business in private. **Either you are for us as a whole, or you are against us.**

When we pay union dues we get representation by a co-worker - - appointed by one of our most experienced elected officers - - who steps up and sacrifices of themselves to help us. Our union dues do not entitle any of us



A Little Humor for You and something to Possibly Ponder / Use

Food Crisis!

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the total cost of sixteen basic grocery items increased by about 8% between the 4th quarter of 2007 and the 1st quarter of 2008. Some price hikes you might see in your grocery bill include:

- ⇒ Five pound bag of flour: up 69 cents to \$2.39
- ⇒ One pound of cheddar cheese: up 61 cents to \$4.71
- ⇒ Thirty-two ounce bottle of corn oil: up 58 cents to \$3.01
- ⇒ One dozen large eggs: up 56 cents to \$2.16
- ⇒ Thirty-two ounce jar of Mayonnaise: up 22 cents to \$3.14
- ⇒ Five pound bag of Russet potatoes: up 18 cents to \$2.47
- ⇒ Twenty ounce loaf of white bread: up 16 cents to \$1.78
- ⇒ One pound of apples: up 13 cents to \$1.40
- ⇒ One pound of ground chuck: up 4 cents to \$2.73

- From The Nation, via The Thumbstall PPA Newsletter

No Union In Hell

I dreamed I died the other night
And woke up down below,
It was a cock-eyed crazy place
That demon den of woe.

T'was like an old-time sweatshop,
That smoky room was hot,
So dimly lit and stinking
T'would make the senses rot.

The men were wet & stained with sweat,
Their faces pale and drawn
Red-eyed they toiled,
Nor dared to stop
From dawn to murky dawn

The only sound was of the clock,
No lip was moved in speech
And by the click,
The hour of rest
Was ever out of reach.

The Devil came to meet me then,
He took me by the hand
I looked about me wildly
And faced the hopeless band.

“Who is the steward here?” I cried.
But no one paid me heed.
They were not men,
But broken beasts,
Mere slaves to Satan’s greed.

And then I heard a whisper
“There is no Union here.”
Old Satan laughed and shouted,
“That’s why it’s hell down here.”

The Problem with Chinese Goods

Reprinted from ‘101 Facts’

“Made in China” has become a warning label. Look out! Toxins in toothpaste, arsenic in shrimp, lead in toys! Politicians are pointing their fingers at China’s lackadaisical approach to product safety; but, wait a minute; where, or where, are our own regulatory watchdogs?

The big shock is not that Chinese-made toys are laden with lead, but that US Consumer Product Safety Commission is a toothless watchdog that employs exactly one inspector to oversee the safety of all toys sold in the US. Likewise, the Food and Drug Administration has licensed 714 Chinese plants to manufacture the key ingredients for a growing percentage of the antibiotics, pain killers, and other drugs we buy, but provides practically no oversight of the plants. In 2007, for example, the FDA inspected only 13 of them.

An ever bigger shock is that our consumer protection laws are so riddled with loopholes that unsafe products can legally come into our country. Take Phthalate, a chemical additive in plastics that is suspected by scientists here and in Europe of inhibiting testosterone production in infant boys. Yet, Mark Shapiro, author of ‘Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products’, reports that, while the European Union has barred the use of phthalates in products aimed at children under three years of age, our government has refused to act.

Thus, China has factories that manufacture two lines of toys – one without phthalates for shipment to European countries and one with phthalates for shipment to our children.

The problem is not with the Chinese, but with our own corporate chieftains who have moved their manufacturing to China specifically to get these kinds of low-cost shortcuts in productions, while simultaneously demanding that Washington cut back on regulations that protect us consumers. We must put our own house in order.

Union Label and Service Trade Dept, AFL-CIO – via Fargo Tour Guide, June 2008 Edition



MPWU OFFICERS/EXECUTIVE BOARD

President, Gary VanHoogstraten
H: 989-894-2656; e-Mail: President@mpwu.com

Executive Secretary, Harold Juhl
W: 517-337-8753; H: 517-651-7115; FAX: 517-332-4391; e-Mail: ExecSecretary@mpwu.com

Secretary-Treasurer, Darren Joyce
W: 810-257-1530; U: 810-239-0931; FAX: 810-239-6879; e-Mail: Treasurer@mpwu.com

Director of Education & Research, Michael McCain
U: 313-532-9305; H: 586-445-8025 e-Mail: Education@mpwu.com

Editor, Michael Long
U: 616-776-1489; C: 616-302-1409; F: 616-776-1536; e-Mail: Editor@mpwu.com

Legislative Dir., John Marcotte
U: 989-619-1741; H: 989-705-1470 e-Mail: Legislative@mpwu.com

HR/Injury Comp Dir., Jennifer Amos
W&U: 616-776-1489; F: 616-776-1536 e-Mail: injurycomp@mpwu.com

Clerk Craft Director, Richard Blake
H: 734-433-5461; U: 313-532-9305; W: 734-665-1107; e-Mail: ClerkCRaftDir@mpwu.com

Maintenance Craft Director, Larry Miller
U: 248-543-3262; e-Mail: Maintenance@mpwu.com

Motor Vehicle Service Craft Dir., Joe Wrobel
U: 248-543-3262; W: 248-546-7146; e-Mail: MVSDirector1@mpwu.com

Veterans Director, John Smeekens
W: (248) 546-7146; U: (248) 543-3262 e-Mail: Veterans@mpwu.com

Area 1 Director, Larry Moyer
W: 248-619-1590; H: 810-678-3479; C: 810-338-2659; e-Mail: Area1Director@mpwu.com

Area 2 Director, Keith Fletcher
W: 313-226-8393; U: 313-532-9305; F: 734-483-9086; e-Mail: Area2Director@mpwu.com

Area 3 Director, Current Vacant
(Contact Area 2 Dir for Assistance)

Area 4 Director, Laura Bullock
W: 810-257-1567; U: 810-239-0931; H: 810-606-0465; e-Mail: Area4Director@mpwu.com

Area 5 Director, Joanna Atkinson
W: 989-771-5718; H: 989-865-7924; e-Mail: Area5Director@mpwu.com

Area 6 Director, Mary Stephenson
W: 517-337-8753; C: 517-612-3563; H: 517-639-4873; e-Mail: Area6Director@mpwu.com

Area 7 Director, Thomas Lothamer
W: 517-278-2632; C: 517-677-6198; H: 517-639-4873; e-Mail: Area7Director@mpwu.com

Area 8 Director, Russ Nicoson
H: 517-569-3911; W: 517-768-0726; e-Mail: Area8Director@mpwu.com

Area 9 Director, Amy Puhalski
W: 616-776-1489; C: 616-822-3678; e-Mail: Area9Director@mpwu.com

Area 10 Director, Ron Krumrie
W: 231-946-5217; U: 231-935-4140; H: 231-946-7796 e-Mail: Area10Director@mpwu.com

Area 11 Director, Mike Wekwert
W: 989-354-2520; H: 989-356-2302; e-Mail: Area11Director@mpwu.com

Area 12 Director, Dennis Barber
U: 906-774-6303; H: 906-282-0977; FAX: 906-774-7353; e-Mail: Area12Director@mpwu.com

P.O.W.E.R. Rep, Karen Hodges
H: 616-453-7091; W: 776-1542; U: 616-776-1489 e-Mail: PowerRep@mpwu.com

State Retiree Chapter President, Al LaBrecque
H: 989-736-8173; e-Mail: RetireePres@mpwu.com

MPWU Auxiliary President, Kelly Wilniski
H: (906) 779-1348; C: (906) 282-2897 e-Mail: AuxiliaryPres@mpwu.com

MPWU Historian, Debbie Brand
H: 269-729-9600; W: 269-965-3286 e-Mail: Historian@mpwu.com

The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Any and all correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; fax to: 616-776-1536; or e-Mail to: mpwueditor@yahoo.com

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.

Lastly, 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.



The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Alpena | Battle Creek |
| Central MI | Charlotte |
| Cheboygan | Detroit District |
| Farmington | Fenton |
| Flint | 480-481 |
| 498-499 | Gaylord |
| Hillsdale | Jackson |
| Ludington | Muskegon |
| Petoskey | Pontiac |
| Roger City | Saginaw |
| Saint Ignace | Sault Ste Marie |
| Southwest MI | Stevensville |
| Traverse City | Troy Local |
| Western MI | |

Check Us Out on the Web

MPWU.com

Upcoming Events to Plan For:

- August 18 - 22, 2008 - National APWU Convention, Las Vegas, NV
- June 11 - 12, 2009—Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting - Bay City, MI
- June 12 - 14, 2009—MPWU Educational Convention, Bay City, MI
- August 6 - 8, 2009 - National Postal Press Convention, Las Vegas, NV
- April/May 2010 - MPWU Constitutional Convention, Lansing, MI



Union Word Search

Can You Find All Words Associated with the Union

A P N G N I S S E C X E R I H S I
 K I A B H O E S A F E T Y N O P N
 O I U E T T I D E R C C S U L O E
 O Y P N N E L T S C N O E U I S S
 B T N E E O I A A M O U D T D T A
 D I Y F M N I N E R I R A U A I C
 N R I I E C C N R H T C P E Y N O
 A O C T E N L U U O A I J E S G N
 H I T S R C T A M V T S B S U S S
 T N I U G S J L I B N P F R U D T
 C E R F A M I L Y M E D I C A L I
 A S S I G N M E N T S R I E M L T
 R T A L L O W A N C E S E O V T U
 T E A E C N A V E I R G U D N A T
 N S S D R A W E T S P C F N N A I
 O D I S C I P L I N E O D B R R O
 C S A S O A M N G I R M M E U M N

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------|
| AGREEMENT | ALLOWANCES | BENEFITS |
| ANNUAL LEAVE | ARBITRATION | CLAIMS |
| ASSIGNMENTS | CONSTITUTION | CONTRACT |
| CREDIT (as in Credit Union) | DUE PROCESS | DISCIPLINE |
| EXCESSING | FAMILY MEDICAL | EAP |
| GRIEVANCE | HANDBOOK | HEALTH |
| HOLIDAYS | JCIM | LMOU |
| POSTINGS | REPRESENTATION | SAFETY |
| SENIORITY | UNENCUMBERED | STEWARDS |
| UNION | VACATION | |

Twelve Union Rules to Live By

“The Union and membership alike have a responsibility for accountability.”

1. Always be honest. If you don't like the way your Steward handled your grievance, tell him/her. Don't tell everyone else, and let him/her find out through the rumor mill.
2. Count your blessings. Not every job has a union willing to go to bat daily for any unethical treatment by management.
3. Bear each other's burdens. Let's not forget that we are in this together. We must support one another.
4. Forgive and forget. Sometimes hanging onto that piece of discontent can be like a cancer, slowly eating away at the body. We need to take care of it, and move on.
5. Be kind and tender-hearted. Sometimes a soft answer is all that is needed. Sometimes just placing ourselves in the other's shoes is a great eye opener.
6. Comfort one another. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, but if we have done our best, and the membership believes that we have done our best, then we can take comfort in knowing that we tried.
7. Keep your promises. The Union and membership alike have a responsibility for accountability.
8. Be proud of one another. Tell your Steward what a great job they did when they come through for you. Thank them for endless hours they took away from their families to get your grievance done, and I promise you that, in turn, they will remember to tell you what a good Union member you are for the tireless job you do in working and supporting your Union.
9. Get to know one another. Take the time to really know your steward, and they will take the time to really get to know you.
10. Be true to one another. Don't talk behind each other's backs. Let's be up front with each other, with our likes and dislikes, and of what we do, and how we do it.
11. Look at each other. That's what friends and associates do. Be there for them, and they will be there for you.
12. Treat each other with the utmost respect. Treat each co-worker as you treat your friends, for that is what we all should be friends.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE MICHIGAN MESSENGER

- President's Report – Gary VanHoogstraten...Page 1
 Long and Short of It – Michael Long.....Page 2
 Veterans' Report - John Smeekens.....Page 2
 Clerk Craft Report - Richard Blake.....Page 4
 Retiree Involvement - Al LaBrecque.....Page 5
 NBA Report / Turney Talks - Linda Turney....Page 8
 Editorial - A Special Note to "The Expert" ... Page 9
 A Little Humor and something to Ponder..... Page 10
 Officers and Executive Board Members.....Page 11
 Upcoming Events.....Page 11
 Union Word Search.....Page 12
 Twelve Union Rules to Live by.....Page 12

Return to APWU/MPWU
 c/o Michael Long, Editor
 P.O. Box 280
 Sheridan, MI 48884-0280
Address Service Requested

Non-profit Organization
 U.S. Postage PAID
 Fenton, MI
 Permit No. 1776