



Michigan Messenger

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Happy Holidays



*From the members and their families of the Michigan
Postal Workers Union's Executive Board —
Wishing you and yours the best of this holiday season!*



President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President

After 21 months on the campaign trail, battling through 50 states, one must look back at November 4, 2008 as one for the history book. In one of my local papers, it had an article with the headlines of "Hire the best man for all the people." We're a nation of diversity, different colors, religion, and cultures. But on this day in history we put all things on the table. Also on this day, we set aside our differences and thought about how our vote would affect our children and future generations. When we went to the polls, we had to ask ourselves: Is this the right man to lead our country? He must be the best person to serve all Americans and work with all people around the world. Americans voted in unprecedented numbers in this election, topping the record set in the 2004 Presidential race by several million. More than 133 million voters turned out. Figures show that the turnout was close to that of 1964, but higher than when John Kennedy squeaked out a victory over Richard Nixon. About 1 in 5 people said they faced long lines at polling places, yet there were few polling places which experienced any major problems.

Michigan voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of Barack Obama. Totals for Michigan were 2,867,680 for Obama to 2,044,405 for McCain. Yes, I voted for Obama. But in reality I not only voted for myself, but for my children and grandchildren. I voted partially for the man Obama is: A man who inspires me and who has the potential; of being a great leader, not in just America but around the world. But mostly I voted for Obama because I think he represents the best interest of my family. For those doubters, give these next four years a chance. We just are about to leave 4

We won!

years of disaster or maybe it was 8 years. Nothing can be accomplished overnight. Like I wrote in earlier articles during the primaries, leave out race, religion and sex, and vote for the one person that you feel could lead you as the Commander In Chief. As Barack Obama's slogan says "A Change". which was plain and simple. Hopefully in the next 4 years our country will see a change for the better.

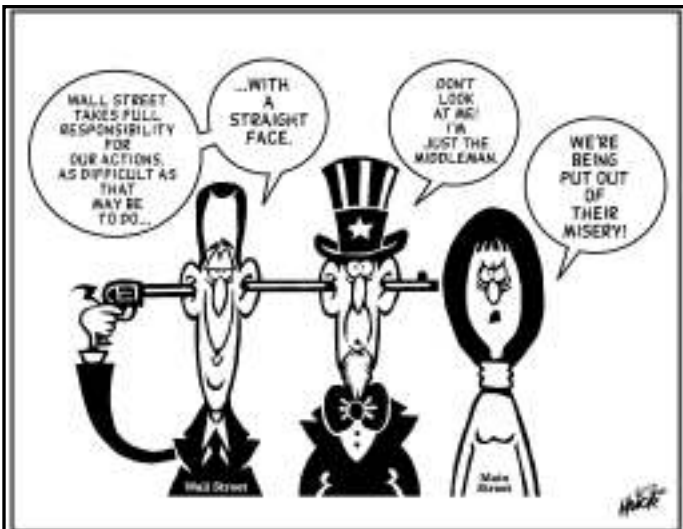
Our economy is the first priority, and being from Michigan, the Big Three issue must also take a paramount role. Besides these, there are many other issues facing President-elect Obama. With his selection of his cabinet, one can only hope we get back on the right track. I also hope he looks across the aisle, because there are a few leaders there that would be willing to step up and lead this country with him.

District Meeting.

Information is included in this edition of the Messenger regarding the upcoming District Meeting. Joanna, Mary, and Laura have worked tirelessly in making sure that the classes being offered are germane to the issues we are currently facing not only in Area 4, 5, & 6, but the entire state as well. Please make every effort to be there.

Until Next Time,

Gary VanHoogstraten





The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor

As I sit down to write this month's article, it is like a winter wonderland outside. If there is any doubt we live in Michigan, one just needs to look all around, see the snow, listen to news broadcasts regarding slide offs, and just try to remember what summer is like.

This month's article is going to be short and sweet. I wanted to let you know that I have chosen a new printer and mailer. This edition of the Messenger is being done by Stacey Publishing. For those that are familiar with the Postal Press Association (the organization that the Editors in the APWU belong to), know Stacey Publishing since they attend all the training, and is an honorary member of the PPA, as well as being 100% union and proud of it. During the past two years, in an attempt to lower the cost to the state organization, and in turn to you the member, I have been tracking the cost of printing, mailing, and publishing this newsletter. I would not expect anything less of anyone else in this position.

Another expense cost that has been implemented, is the reduction of photos from the events in the Michigan Messenger. Unfortunately, it costs more for the printer to put photos in the paper to ensure the photo contrasts are correct, etc. Instead of incurring more cost, it is more fiscally responsible to just place the photos of all events on the website for you to view. Please take a moment to visit the photo section on MPWU.com.

Stop The Press! I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate the Chicago Union Workers for standing up for what is right. They came away with their Annual, Sick, and Severance Pay. While management was trying to break the union, the union stood up and didn't back down. Well done!

In closing, I wish each of you and yours the best of this holiday season. Please take a moment to enjoy and be thankful of all you have.

Until next time,

Yours Solidarity,

Mike



Veteran's Report

John Smeekens
Veterans Director

COMPENSATION INCREASE

President Bush has signed into law legislation providing a 5.8% cost-of-living increase in VA compensation benefits. The measure increases compensation paid to veterans with service-connected disabilities, as well as dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of deceased veterans. Last year's cost of living adjustment was 2.3%. The benefit increase will take effect on December 01, 2008 and will first appear on January 2009 benefits checks. The increase is pegged to changes in the Consumer Price Index which is a key measure of inflation. The increase will affect about 2.8 million veterans and survivors. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

NEW VA LOAN RULES

Two new bills, H. R. 6832 and S. 3023, are making some changes for Veterans' Home Loans and Refinancing. H. R. 6832 removes the requirement for having 10% equity in your home before being eligible to refinance, and now allows you to refinance up to the maximum guarantee of \$417,000.00 in most area, and up to \$729,000.00 in high cost areas (*please don't tell my wife*). The maximum limit before was \$144,000.00 with 10% equity. Presently the bill is awaiting Mr. Bush's signature. I'll keep you posted.

RURAL HEALTH CARE

Don't get too excited because it's only in the talking stages right now, but it was approved unanimously by the House to create a pilot project for "HIGHLY RURAL" Veterans'. H. R. 1527 would, if passed and signed by the President, allow rural Veterans the chance to obtain health care at government expense from non-VA health care providers. Eligible Veterans' would be those that live more than 60 miles from the nearest VA primary care facility, more than 120 miles from the nearest VA acute care hospital or more than 240 miles from the nearest VA specialty care clinic. Yeah I know it sounds like a lot of mumbo jumbo, but I'm sure it will get cleaned up to an understandable point once it gets closer to possible approval. Presently the bill has been forwarded to the Senate VA committee. As always, I'll keep you posted.

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Veteran's Report Continued

RURAL HEALTH CLINIC

Hey you Veterans' up there in the Manistique Michigan area, you're supposed to be getting a new Veterans' Health Care Clinic opening some time in August 2009. The clinic will provide primary care services, case management and mental health services. So far it looks like this new guy, VA Secretary James Peake, is trying to get some things done for the Veterans'. Yep, you know it, "I'll keep you posted."

DEDICATION

It's Sunday November 09, 2008 and I've just returned from the new Michigan Metroplex in Pontiac Michigan where they held a formal dedication of the building. It was a long and timely process, but it was well worth it. The Michigan Metroplex has now been dedicated to Veterans' from the State of Michigan, both Past, Present, and Future. Southeast Michigan Performance Cluster, District Manager, Ms. Kelly Sigmon, who was extremely helpful in getting this dedication to come to fruition, was one of the speakers along with Mr. Pete Edwards, Senior Plant Manager. The National Anthem was sung by employee, JoAnn Byas-White. Master of Ceremonies duties were performed by Dan Orton, while the Rendering of Honors to The Colors was performed by seven members of The United States Army Color Guard from the Pontiac Recruiting Station. But I would have to say that Angela Barbret, an employee at the Metroplex, a **Gold Star Mother**, was the one speaker who brought the importance of this dedication to the forefront. Angie's Son Mark, gave The Ultimate Sacrifice, in Ramadi, Iraq on October 14, 2004. She spoke of Mark, and then read a poem. I know there weren't many dry eyes during her heartfelt speech. An unplanned flyover did happen, but definitely not what you would expect. Then we all approached

the corner of the sidewalk near the Flag pole and the Main entrance, and the Dedication Plaque affixed to the boulder was unveiled by Angie, Kelly, and Pete, while the inscription was read by Dan. Then. The Family Fun Day proceeded forward after that with great anticipation. There were several vehicles there for the kids and adults to look at both from the Postal Service and the Pontiac Fire Department. The Inspection Service also had their command vehicle on hand for people to examine. There was even a Mirror Station set up so people could get an idea of what carriers have to look for when driving a right hand drive vehicle. Tours of the Metroplex left every ½ hour starting at 11:30 AM till 2:30 PM. In the Media room, there were several booths set up with information for everyone. IT was on hand to help with computer questions, along with a Bone Marrow table with Q & A information. The front door lobby had numerous pieces of stamp art work, and special envelopes and post cards available for sale. The cafeteria was open and your tour included a hot dog, bag of chips, and a can of pop. All in all, there was a great turn out for the dedication and fun day.

HOLIDAYS

I'm not sure when you'll be reading this issue of The Michigan Messenger, but I would like to take a moment to wish all of you and your families the safest, healthiest, and happiest of the upcoming Holiday Season. And don't forget the troops overseas and around the world that are keeping us safe and free from tyranny. Say a quick prayer for them.

John

Legislative Report



John Marcotte
 Legislative Director

Election Season, from many different angles

The Street- Canvassing is a different word and an even different experience. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of working for a political campaign I'll explain. You are assigned an area or neighborhood to walk door to door and find out the political leanings of the residents. Those that are for your candidate you ensure they know where their polling place is and if they know of candidates for other offices that share the party or views of your candidate. Those that are undecided but interested in your candidate you supply literature and answer questions as to why you support that candidate. Those that are for an opposing candidate you thank them for their time and move on. You record this information on a list of registered voters for that address so it can be used to know if voters need help getting to the polls and who may need to be revisited before they will support your candidate.

We were assigned a subsidized low income housing development and its surrounding streets as our area. Our processing facility is literally across the fence from this housing development. I see the front doors of many of these homes as I arrive and leave work. I never realized how far away from my world those homes were until I went door to door and talked with my neighbors. A job that they can work 40 hours a week or make a little more than minimum wage is just not attainable to

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Legislative Report Continued

most of these neighbors. This is not for lack of effort or lack of education in 9 out of 10 people we talked to. The only benefit at their jobs, if they have one, is a minimum wage paycheck. The cruel irony in this is that Michigan raised its minimum wage above the Federal level in an attempt to help these Americans. The result was making some of these American families ineligible for federal aide like day care assistance because they now make too much money. This created a net loss for the family's budget. Health Care is provided by the State due to low income or they would have none available to them. The American dream has missed this neighborhood. Just living day to day is a losing battle for most of these Americans. Most noticeable was the lack of hope that life would get better or our government would ever help those most vulnerable. This led to apathy in even casting a vote by several of these Americans that have the most to lose if the government continues in the direction it is heading. On the bright side there was an appreciation by these people that someone would take the time to value their opinion. Just letting most of these family's know that their vote counts and the location of their polling place was enough to get them motivated to vote in this election.

The Office- The Democratic Party Headquarters is located on Main Street in our town. This election was shockingly different from others in an obvious way. Our County is so red that republicans run unopposed for all county and township offices. The first indication of change was when the APWU had to supply this office with Obama campaign signs because they ran out of signs a month before the election. When we showed up to our assigned shift the day before the election we were told that due to the excessive number of volunteers that just showed up we could hang out or go home! Too many volunteers to make

calls or walk the streets making sure people had a ride to the polls is unheard of. Going to the Democratic Dinner and other events you realize the average age of involved party members is on the high side of 50. This time the local office, along with the Obama campaign had an influx of young voters working for change. Working with the Obama campaign was the first time I felt old and it was a good thing.

The Big Day- Regardless of who you supported in this campaign Election Day was a great day to be an American. Seeing long lines at my polling place at eleven o'clock in the morning was a wonderful sight. This simple act is what makes us who we are. For the government to derive its power from the people not by entitlement or from itself was a revolutionary concept when our founding fathers created it. This fundamental right that the government only rules with the consent of the governed makes being an American truly a gift. Unfortunately I have voted in many elections where our right to vote was not cherished and voter turnout was low. This essence of being an American (voting in free elections) is a disease of freedom to every oppressive and abusive form of government the world has seen since our inception. As such, people that want to copy our government of "We the people" in other places have been under constant persecution and attack around the world. To exercise your right to vote is not only supporting the candidate of your choice but so much more. It is a biannual reminder to our government that "they work for us". It is our standing up in support of free elections around the world. It is a thank you to the long line of men and women in our military that have paid the ultimate price to ensure our right to vote these 240 odd years. I have never been in a long line anywhere at any time and seen the goodwill and pleasantness I saw this day. I think we all realized this was a special day and really good thing for our country.

Post Election- I cannot overstate just what an important piece to the American puzzle electing Senator Obama as President of the United States is. Yes, Obama the candidate will not doubt improve the lives of the working man more than has been done in a generation. Yes, Obama's background of working in inner city Chicago gives him an understanding of how important manufacturing and in particular the union movement is in the preservation of the American middle class. Yes, he is a candidate that will stop the partisan politics that have left us a country with no energy policy, no clear foreign affairs policy, a decade long exodus of jobs overseas and no oversight of corporate pirates that have secured billions of dollars for themselves while driving iconic American businesses into bankruptcy. These are not the reasons this election is so important. What makes this election so historic is a dream realized. Forty years after Dr. King stated his dream for his children to be judged on the content of their character not the color of their skin that is just what America did. Race simply was not the issue in 2008. Will President Obama be able to succeed in such a difficult time in our history? Only time will tell. Now it is time for this country to put party and politics aside and support our new president in his attempts to fix the many problems we are facing.

Congratulations to all of you that voted and thank you for doing your part in this election. Is our job complete? Not even close. We now have to undo eight years of a full attack on unions and the middle class it destroyed. It is now time to use the legislative process to advance interests of the working men and women of this country. I'll give you all some idea what that is all about in the next issue. May you all have a wonderful Holiday Season and a New Year full of happiness and joy.

Yours in Solidarity and Friendship,

John



Area 5 Report

Joanna Atkinson
Area 5 Director

The District Meeting for Areas 4, 5 and 6 is set for January 30 and 31, 2009. The meeting will be held in Saginaw at the Ramada Inn. Information about this meeting can be found in this edition of the Messenger. If you are from this area and would like to attend, I would highly encourage it. Not only would you have the opportunity to meet some of your National officers, but also an opportunity to learn information to protect yourself and your job during this hard time. Please give me a call for more information. Registration for this event is \$75.00, which includes lunch on Saturday. If you are bringing someone with you and would like them to join for you lunch on Saturday, the cost is \$15.00. Please make those checks payable to the MPWU and send them directly to Darren Joyce, MPWU Treasurer, PO Box 1124, Flint, MI 48503. We MUST have a head count for the hotel. We are not doing a dinner at this meeting. We are really trying to keep costs down for all people attending.

The deadline for room reservations will be December 20, 2008. This also means this is the deadline for the luncheon tickets. When you call to make your reservation, be sure to mention you are with the MPWU. The hotel's phone number is 989-793-7900. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call me at 989-865-7924, after 1pm or contact Laura or Mary.

I look forward to seeing you there.

In Solidarity,

Joanna



Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque
Retiree's Chapter President

(The following column is an updated reprint of an article written for the Dec. '07 issue of the "Flint Facts". From the feedback I've received, I believe it may be informative and useful for our MPWU seniors, particularly those approaching the milestone age 65.)

MEDICARE PARTS A, B, AND D - SOME ANSWERS

Medicare: One of the most frequent inquiries I receive - particularly this time of year - come from retirees who are approaching the magic age 65! I'm certainly no expert on the subject, and I don't give "advice" as to what they should do. I can only relate from my own 6-year experience on Medicare, and what I research from the "Medicare & You" book published annually by the Social Security Administration. Once enrolled in Medicare, this book is mailed to you annually.

Some of the most often asked questions are: "Why should I enroll in Medicare if I already have health insurance?" "What's Medicare going to cost me?" "Do I HAVE to enroll in Medicare?" "What is Medicare Part A and Part B?" "Should I enroll in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program?" "What do I have to do to enroll in Medicare?" "What does Medicare Part A and Part B cover?" I'll try to cover those questions and a general overview of Medicare as it relates to CSRS and FERS retirees. Much of what I relate herein is lifted from the "Medicare & You" book, and I will tell you how it has benefitted me.

First of all, CSRS employees who retired after January 1, 1985, are eligible for Medicare coverage by virtue of having paid 1.45% Medicare payroll deductions, even if they're not eligible to draw Social Security monthly benefits (S.S. check). FERS retirees are eligible for both Social Security benefits and Medicare. Generally, CSRS and FERS retirees will only have to be concerned with Medicare Parts A and B.

Medicare Part A: (Hospital insurance) helps cover your inpatient care in hospitals. Part A also helps cover skilled nursing facilities, hospice, and home health care if you meet certain conditions. You usually don't pay a monthly premium for Part A coverage if you paid Medicare taxes while working. You will automatically get Part A starting the first day of the month you turn age 65. Your Medicare card will be mailed to you about three (3) months before your 65th birth-

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Retiree Involvement Continued

day.

Medicare Part B: (Medical insurance) helps cover medically-necessary services like a doctor's services and outpatient care. Part B also helps cover some preventative services to help maintain your health, and to keep certain illnesses from getting worse. It will also cover other services that part A doesn't cover. You will pay a monthly Part B premium each month. The Part B monthly premium for 2009 is \$96.40 (which remains the same as it was for 2008). You also pay a Part B deductible each year before Medicare starts to pay its share, which in 2008 was \$135. (May have changed for 2009. New book & rates not received at this writing).

Important: If you don't sign up for Part B when you are first eligible, the cost for Part B may go up 10% for each full 12-month period you could have had Part B, but didn't sign up for. The initial 7-month enrollment period begins three (3) months before your 65th birthday, and ends three (3) months after your 65th birthday. If you (for some reason) don't want Part B, follow the instructions that come with the Medicare card and send it back. If you keep the card, you keep Part B.

If you are a CSRS retiree, and have sufficient quarters (credits) to draw Social Security benefits (a monthly check) by virtue of having paid FICA taxes from employment in the private sector, the Part B monthly premium will be automatically deducted from your monthly S.S. benefit. If you do not receive a S.S. monthly benefit, you will pay the monthly premium out-of-pocket. You will receive a monthly billing from the SSA. FERS retirees will receive a monthly S.S. benefit and should not have to pay the premium out-of-pocket. CSRS employees who retired after January

1, 1985, and who receive S.S. monthly benefits, are adversely affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which reduces the monthly S.S. benefit by a 40% factor. Depending on the amount of your monthly S.S. benefit (and most are pretty small), it should cover all, or part of your Part B premium. If your S.S. benefit is insufficient to cover the total Part B monthly premium, you will be billed for the balance.

The above is a general overview of Medicare Parts A and B. I strongly suggest that you go to your SSA office and request the "Medicare & You 2009" book, which contains complete information. Whether or not you enroll in Medicare Part B is entirely a personal decision based on your individual circumstances. I can only tell you what my personal experiences have been, which I believe are fairly typical.

Assuming that you are automatically enrolled in Part A (at no cost to you), and you enroll in Part B, Medicare becomes your primary insurance coverage, and again, assuming that you carried Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) insurance into retirement, your FEHBP plan becomes your secondary insurance coverage. In most instances, whatever Medicare does not cover in billed services, your FEHBP plan will. In my own case this includes; four major surgeries, hospitalizations, regular doctor visits, numerous tests, treatments, procedures, and medical appliances - I have not paid one dime out-of-pocket...yet. However!! That could change!! Efforts by the Bush Administration and certain unfriendly Members of Congress to "privatize" Social Security and cut Medicare benefits demonstrates that we must be vigilant against all threats to diminish our earned benefits. Yes, the monthly Medicare part B premium and my

FEHBP premium are pretty hefty. And yes, the annual premium increases pretty much eat up any Cost Of Living Allowance increases the market basket dictates. But, I view it as "pay them now, or pay them later". If I had to pay hospital and medical fees I've incurred over the past six years, I'd never get out of debt.

Should you keep your FEHBP health insurance coverage? Medicare Parts A and B DO NOT include prescription drug coverage. Prescription drug coverage under FEHBP plans is far superior (or as good as) Medicare Part D drug coverage. Medicare Part D is basically for those with limited income or resources who do not have health insurance.

Understand, that if you drop your FEHBP health insurance, **you cannot re-enroll...ever!** But, before you do, I strongly suggest you thoroughly investigate costs and coverage of any supplemental health insurance for possible savings. Another personal choice, but irrevocable once made.

I've tried to cover the most frequently asked questions and the fundamentals of Medicare for those of you who are nearing that "golden" age of 65. Feel free to share it with anyone whom you believe this information will benefit. Again, most of the information contained herein is lifted from the "Medicare & You" book published by the SSA. For me, at least, not enrolling in Medicare Part B would be "penny wise and pound foolish". Just one for instance: As a diabetic, I'm eligible to purchase one pair of diabetic shoes (specially fitted) per year. These shoes (incredibly, I might add) cost around \$400. and I haven't had to spend one penny. All in all, I'm way ahead of the game. So, you're healthy as a horse?! HEY! You're going to be 65, and the older we get (God willing), the more likely we're going to

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Retiree Involvement Continued

experience medical needs more, and more. My FEHBP and Medicare coverage provide a great deal of peace of mind. That's my experience thus far. You have to make that decision for your own particular needs and circumstances based on the best information available.

R e t i r e e C O L A I n -
 crease: (Source: APWU Retirees' Dept. Oct. 16, 2008) Effective with the January, 2009 annuity check: The CSRS COLA is 5.8 percent for 2009. Retirees eligible for monthly Social Security benefits, the COLA increase is 5.8 percent. FERS retirees COLA is to be 4.8 percent. When the CPI increase is more than 3%, there is automatically 1% deducted for FERS retirees. If you retired during the past year, prorated accounts for either CSRS or FERS will receive one-twelfth (1/12th) of the full COLA.

Wishing all our active and retired members a bountiful Thanksgiving, A Blessed and Merry Christmas, and a Healthy and Happy 2009!

Be Strong!

Al

POS Machines, Shortages, and "Instant" Letter of Demands

By: Brian Dunn & Marty Barron
 Clerk Craft NBAs—Western Region

Open Letter to all,

Understandably, there has been a great deal of concern over the new "function" of the POS terminals that will allow them to automatically print Letters of Demand upon the occurrence of a shortage. We believe the use of this function, to "automatically" print Letters of Demand, is in violation of the National Agreement. For example, part 429.16 states:

"Handling Shortages

1 For shortage amounts exceeding tolerance, record in AIC 767, Stamp Credit Shortage Issued, on employee's Form 1412.

2 If the shortage is related to an overage in another accountability of the same employee or to a current overage in another employee's accountability, require the employee to replace the missing amount.

3 When there is a balance for that employee from a previous overage within 1 year and a relationship is established, use this balance to offset part or all of the shortage.

4 If no relationship is established, follow collection procedures in Article 28, section 4, of the National Agreement (see section 361). Managers should exercise judgment when determining the existence of a relationship that may warrant offsetting shortages.

5 Upon collection of funds, enter the amount collected in AIC 751, Cash Remitted (Advance) on Form 1412 and offset with AIC 367, Stamp Credit Shortage Cleared.

Offsetting Differences

The postmaster or designee must decide whether to adjust shortages and overages found in the audit of stamp credits and other cash accountability.

If a postmaster believes that an overage in one employee's credit should be offset against a shortage in another employee's credit because a relationship between the differences exists, secure the written agreement of the employee from whom the overage is to be withdrawn."

The "automatic" nature of this new functionality, which apparently "issues" a Letter of Demand for all shortages, conflicts with any language that requires the manager to use judgment or reason (or any other decisional authority). Assistant Director Rob Strunk has already requested a meeting with the Postal Service on the matter and we are hopeful the matter will be resolved at that level.

In the mean time, Letters of Demand issued via this "automatic" system should of course be grieved. In addition to arguing other violations that may have occurred, you can cite the argument that the issuance of the Demand is in conflict with the National Agreement by virtue of the arbitrary nature of the "functionality" and the removal of any decision-making authority from the "postmaster or designee."

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your local or state officer or this office. While we believe this issue will be resolved at the Headquarters level, as always we must make the appropriate arguments each time any of our members are subjected to these violations.

Again, thanks for everything you do!

**THE DEADLINE
 FOR SUBMITTING
 ARTICLES for the
 January/February
 2009
 Edition of the
 Michigan Messenger
 is January 15, 2009**



NBA Report / Turney Talks

Linda Turney
Central Region NBA - Clerk Craft

Dear APWU Members,

It astonishes me that another year has passed so rapidly. My year has been a mix of new adventure and sadness. Last January, I lost my mother. Mom loved postal workers and the friends that I have made there. Being an NBA has caused me to learn and grow. I've had the opportunity to meet new people and begin new friendships.

But, this is not the happiest of Holiday Seasons. Our nation has been shaken by a severe economic crisis that no one seems to know how to repair. Over the Thanksgiving weekend a tragedy unfolded in India with the terrorist bombings, killing and hostage taking in Mumbai. Violence on Holidays somehow seems crueler.

The Post Office has always historically been linked to the pressures of our nation. As President-elect Barack Obama has made it clear that we should anticipate that things will get a lot worse due to the serious economic situation. Unemployment is rising, credit is drying up, the house right next door to me went into foreclosure, you and I are blessed that we have a solid middle class job with no layoff protection.

This time of year, many of us review and count our many blessings. This year, I was saddened and infuriated when I heard the story that on Black Friday a mob of bargain hunters pushed in the doors of a Wal-Mart on Long Island and trampled a sales clerk to death. I know that occasionally bargaining hunting has led to pushing, shoving and perhaps an occasional fist fight, but never a fatality. These people were shopping for Christmas gifts with absolutely no spirit of Christmas. I can't even imagine stepping over or onto a dead body just to get the cheapest deal.

What have we become? Our nation used to be revered as the leader of the free world and a country that worked for justice and equality. The terrorist attacks in India will cause us to double our efforts



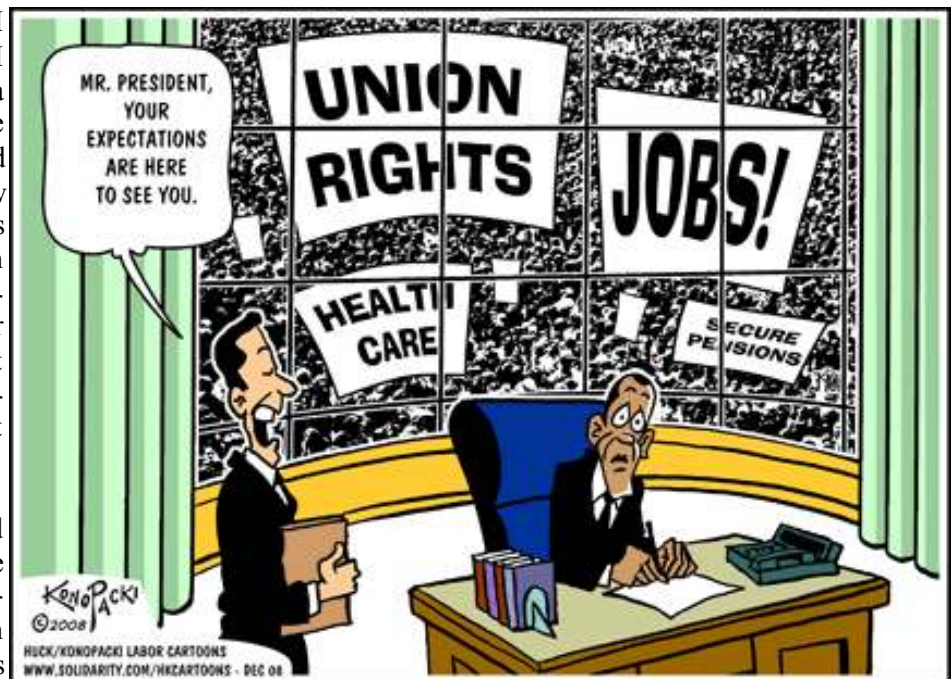
against terrorism. Our new President can work to restore our economic troubles. Who can restore our spirit and what we have become? The death of a sales clerk gives me pause to stop and think about a culture and a people that are willing to step over a lifeless body to get a bargain.

We obviously have many problems that go beyond terrorists, credit crisis, bad mortgages and an economic downturn. We must do better to restore our spirit to take care of each other.

I hope that this year all members of APWU will pause and reflect about living life from the heart. I find that as I get older, more money has never equated to more happiness. If we commit to living life with reverence to others and we are remembered for that, then we will be fulfilled.

Happy Holidays,

Linda



Welcome to the Christmas Season.

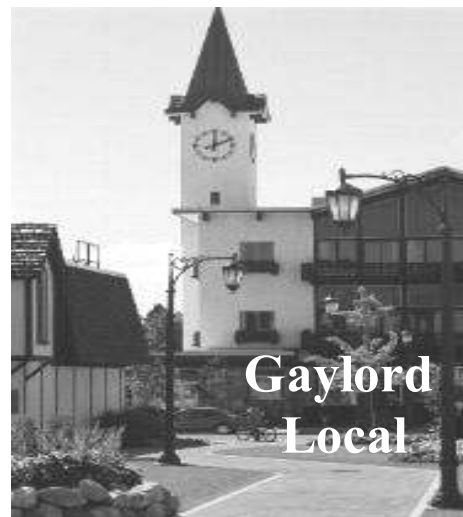
It has been a busy few months for all of us in Gaylord. We have excessing on Tour 2, new DBCS machines, new supervisors, and budget cuts. On a brighter note, we will have a new US President in power, and more labor friendly members of both the house and the Senate. Better days are indeed ahead.

I have received several people's names who are interested in attending the steward training that will be offered January 30-31 in Saginaw. Thank you for your interest. Remember that our motion is to send four people to the training unless it is amended. Stewards will be given first consideration, then we will fill vacant slots with other volunteers.

We need your help! We need your help keeping, not only ours but your job as well. Management is trying to

justify the moving of tour 2 clerks by the increase and use of LWOP. Keep that in mind when you take LWOP. Management uses those LWOP hours to calculate just how many jobs they will be able to cut. Remember, when you take LWOP, according to the Postal Service, that position is not needed at that time. Thus, when you use it constantly, management feels this or that position is not needed either. Protect yourself and your fellow employees minimize your unpaid time off. Also, they are calculating 204B time against the craft. Remember that you could be eliminating your own job.

Take time this season to enjoy your family and help in the community. There are many volunteer organizations that need your assistance. It is a small amount of time out of your schedule for some folks that may not be as fortunate as we. Adopt a family, donate toys for tots, buy winter coats or boots, de-



liver holiday baskets, or donate to a food pantry. Time and money to an organization like this is precious. Keep that in mind while you are out shopping for family and friends this season.

See you at our January meeting.

In Solidarity,
Amy K. Owen

Labor Department Finalizes New Family Leave Rules

The Labor Department announced final revisions in the Family and Medical Leave Act, including new rules defining how families of wounded service members will be able to take unpaid leave to care for them.

The new regulations, as published in the Federal Register, go into effect Jan. 16. Changes include:

- o Allowing employers to require "fitness-for-duty" evaluations for workers who took FMLA time and are returning to jobs that could endanger themselves or others.
- o Allowing businesses to exclude from perfect attendance awards employees who took FMLA time.
- o Stopping employers from charging FMLA time to employees

who come back to work but can only do "light" duty.

- o Prohibiting an employee's direct supervisor from getting an employee's medical information when a medical certification is needed under FMLA.
- o Forcing workers to tell employers in advance when they want FMLA time. Current regulations allow employees to tell employers up to two days after not showing up for work that they are using FMLA. Employees will now have to follow their employer's regular rules for informing them about missing work "absent unusual circumstances."

The new regulations may make it "more difficult for people to use leave when they need it," said Jocelyn Frye, lawyer for the National Partnership for Women and Families.

President-elect Barack Obama proposed expanding the Act during his campaign, including expanding coverage to companies that have 25 or more employees and allowing leave time for elder care, domestic violence and for children's educational activities.

The new regulations define for the first time how the families of military can use the FMLA. Congress voted last year to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act to include six months of leave for military families when a service member gets hurt. Unlike nonmilitary families, in which only spouses, children and parents can take FMLA time, grandparents, aunts, uncles and first cousins will be able to use unpaid leave time, officials said.

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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:**

January 30 - 31, 2009—Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting

April 23 - 26 - MI-AFL-CIO Labor Press Educational Convention

June 12 - 14, 2009—MPWU Educational Convention, Bay City, MI

August 6 - 8, 2009 - National Postal Press Convention, Las Vegas, NV

September 30 - October 3, 2009 - APWU Multi-Craft Conference, Las Vegas, NV

October 4 - 6, 2009 - APWU Health Plan Conference, Las Vegas, NV

April/May 2010 - MPWU Constitutional Convention, Lansing, MI

Looking for Training? Make plans to attend the Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting

When: January 30 - 31, 2009

Where: Ramada Inn & Suites
3325 Davenport Ave
Saginaw, MI 48602

Costs: Room Rates: \$65.00 per night (plus 11% tax)
Registration: \$75.00 (includes one (1) luncheon ticket for Saturday)

Class Schedule:

Friday: January 30, 2009

1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - NBA Open Forum

Saturday, January 31, 2009

9:00 a.m. - Noon - Basic Stewards Training (NBA Linda Turney)
9:00 a.m. - Noon - Excessing/Function 4 (NBA Lynn Pallas-Barber)
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. - Maintenance Issues (Article 38) (NBA Troy Rorman)

Noon - 1:30 p.m. - Recognition Luncheon

1:30 p.m.– 5:00 p.m. - Advanced Stewards Training (NBAs John Clark & Lynn Pallas-Barber)
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - OWCP (MPWU Human Relations Director Jennifer Amos)



Room Reservations and additional luncheon tickets need to be purchased / made prior to December 20, 2008

Happy Holidays

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