

# Michigan

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



by Gary  
VanHoogstraten,  
President

# It Is The US Post Office

Fresh from our recent District Meeting in January, I have to say to Saginaw was that the meeting was one of the best we have had in a while. This goes from the attendance, to the training and hospitality that made it successful. We had originally reserved 50 rooms, and we had to use an overflow hotel for the remaining 30 rooms. The three Area Directors, Joanna Atkinson (5), Laura Bullock (4), and Mary Stevenson (6), we can take our hats off to them for a job well done. I believe it was the first time planning a District Meeting for all three of them. Thanks ladies, good job.

I had a conversation the other day with a gentleman I have known for some 35 years. I first met him while I working the caller service window in my office. He has had this same post office box for his business and own mail until this day. What he said to me one day was "It is the US Post Office now. They are taking service out of it." He explained that he used to come to the window shortly after 7:00 and get some of his mail; then a return trip around 8:30 for the balance. Every so often he came back in the afternoon. However, he then stated: "You have another rate increase coming and the service and hours of operations are being cut and decreased. How many raises have you had in the last 5 years? You try and call someone and that's all you get is a 1-800 number. I want to speak to a person, not a machine he said. Now they are talking about five-day delivery?" If you think he was upset with what I told you, what do you think if he knew about our Postmaster General getting a total compensation and retirement package around \$800,000. I sure he would have exploded. That's twice the amount the President of the United States makes. I tried explaining the raise in postage to what the cost of gasoline has changed so much recently. He sort of took it with a grain of salt. As far as these incentivizes, and bonuses, why has the American people become so greedy? Where have their ethics and morals gone? I am so sick and tired of this, me, me, me in society. I wish I had a suggestion as to how we can recover from this mindset, but I do not have one.

Just a short response from a recent Washington Post paper. The headline was "made in the USA, isn't dead, just different". It may be a country that used

to make everything, is on the brink of making nothing. In January, 207,000 US manufacturing jobs vanished in the largest one month drop since October of 1982. Factory activity is hovering at a 28 year low. Americans make things that other countries can't. Today, "Made in the USA" is more likely to be stamped on heavy equipment on the circuit that go inside other products. Then TV's, toys, clothing, and other items found in store

shelves. Here was a quote from this article, "thirty years ago, US producers made 80% of what the country consumed, according to the Manufacturers Alliance, (MAPI), an industry trade group. Now it is running around 65%. We all know what we face here in the USA. I believe the new administration in Washington has their hands full. This is not something that has happened overnight. I hope their is light at the end of the tunnel.

We are in the final planning stages of the upcoming Educational Convention. I have sent to our Education Director, Mike McCain, a list of officers attending from the National. I know that he had some thoughts in the beginning and I know that he will have a program filled soon. Look for it in this edition of the Messenger and on our website.

Until Next Time.

In Union Solidarity.



by Michael  
A. Long,  
Editor

## Editor's Report

# The Long And Short Of It

However, what they don't tell you, and what they did tell the NAPS delegation, is that they have enough positions to absorb this reduction. Hence, while it might look good on paper that a reduction took place, did it? The answer is No.

Another example of my pessimism is: What company in their right mind would spend \$50, for a \$18 piece. What I am referring to is Express Mail. I have seen management spend money, sending employees to far reaches of the state to ensure timeliness of an Express Piece. While I prefaced this article, saying Service is dead in the Post Office, maybe this is one area that is still thriving, but at what and whose expense? A piece of Express Mail, Flat Rate currently costs \$17.50. However, if a piece of Express mail arrives late for any reason, management makes an employee take this piece of mail to that office to ensure delivery. However, by doing so, more than likely, will place this employee into overtime for at a minimum of one hour. In addition, depending on where this piece of mail may go, it might be 50 to 60 miles away. So, for that one piece of Express mail, costing \$17.50, actually cost: \$37.87 (overtime), plus \$66 (mileage) for a total cost of....drum roll please.....\$103.87 in additional cost to ensure delivery so we don't have a failure. I don't know about you, but if I had a company and it would cost me an additional \$86 for one piece, I would pay the failure amount.

However, my last example of this so called doomsday is: Doing away with management positions, only to promote them into newly created positions (did you

get the promote part?) While I can't speak for all the nation on this (and to preface, everything I say here is only from what I have seen locally or have heard about happening in other locations), what has happened recently is that a few management positions were abolished. However, did those managers go into other lateral positions? Nope. They were promoted into newly created positions specifically for them. Isn't that nice? Now instead of cutting costs, we are paying someone more for doing probably the same job they were doing before. However, management can show they abolished a position.

Actually, I, nor anyone, should be surprised. It is a numbers game. My parents, wife, and friends have said to me countless times: "Liars figure, and figures lie." Why should this place be any different? I am also reminded of a time honored tradition in the Post Office. Have you ever seen management get rid of one of their own? One of us? Hell yea, in a New York minute! Don't get me wrong, when and if it comes time to make sacrifices, I will be the first one to do my part. However, to coin an old adage: "Talk is cheap. True actions speak louder than words."

In closing, I wanted to thank everyone who contacted me regarding the new format of the *Michigan Messenger*. While a few has had some concerns regarding where the fold/crease is located, for the most part, the feedback has been very positive and for a while, this format will stand. However, I am always open to new suggestions, if you have some, please forward them my way. Yours in Solidarity.



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by Joe Wrobel,  
Motor Vehicle  
Craft Director

# Motor Vehicle's Craft Report

## Wheels And Wrenches

We hear about safety almost every time a manager opens their mouth and gives a service talk (especially when they want to stress a useless point to no end). It isn't too often that we hear good things when safety is involved. Postal Officials tell us to be observant of our surroundings, and that is a good thing to do however when we are trying to do our job, in an efficient and effective way it is not always easy to be "observant of our surroundings." I believe that management should be concerned about the lighting and security of the MVS employees. Fortunately we have the ability to perform a balancing act between safety and getting our job done. This is done on a daily basis in our craft, and it does not matter if you are driving a truck, working on a vehicle or walking across an ice covered parking lot. Can any of us figure out why a vehicle that carries a 1,000 lbs. maximum load once a day is more important than a vehicle that carries over 26,000 lbs. load 6 or 7 times a day? Is it just me or are carrier vehicles more important than MVS vehicles? While I'm on the subject, I hear that some district committees on safety (or at least one district level manager) are looking into lumbar supported seats for the carrier vehicles. The price could be between 200-500 dollars per vehicle, meanwhile we have an 11-ton trucks that need a drivers seats, but it can wait until the next scheduled maintenance in the interest of saving money (and because it isn't driven by a carrier).

Speaking of stupid let's take a minute to talk about the safety talks that we get, um let me see I recall one on dog bites, when in the hell has a mechanic ever gotten bit by a dog in the garage. Maybe management is talking about the bulldog on the front of the MACK tractors, watch out they bite. All truck drivers beware and check out the cab before you get into it, just in case a wild dog unlocks the doors

and jumps in while it is parked in the lot during the night. Here is a good one ...lets all remember to use our common sense and use the proper precautions to prevent sun burn, this would be good advice given in June, July and August. Give me a break it's 34 degrees outside and overcast so I'm going to be concerned about sunburn or heat exposure? How about a talk about frostbite or cold weather injuries, be assured it will be given next summer when it 80 degrees and sunny, and management wonders why nobody pays attention during their talks. How about a talk about slipping on the ice or snow which is covering the parking lot instead of falling on a crack in the sidewalk? I am afraid that it would make too much sense to do that. What doesn't make sense to me is that the post office is actually paying someone to come up with these ideas and or topics for their so-called safety talks. These things just don't happen at one office or location, this crap has been passed through out all districts. As your union we will try to correct any safety deficiencies brought to our attention. As union members you have the right to file a step 2 grievance when it comes to safety issues and your grievance will be heard. Filling out 1767 is a waste of time since there is never a proper or timely response to them with-in our craft, but you should still fill them out (for proof/management notification) and then file a grievance.

Since I am rambling I would like to address what I think is one of the Dumbest MOU's that I have ever come across (President Burrus MOU/Pilot Program for PVS Drivers). I personally disagree with it; however the support is growing in other places (not in our state). I have called Brother Pritchard and Brother Foster at headquarters and let them know that we do not want this pilot program nor will we agree to it here in Michigan. They both have said that if it is not wanted or agree too here in this state that it would not be forced upon us. Brother Pritchard and Brother Foster explained the MOU

this way on their national web site:

(01/29/09) The USPS and the APWU signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Jan. 15, 2009, creating a pilot program that will amend work rules governing Postal Vehicle Service drivers. The pilot program will experiment with alternative scheduling at a limited number of installations, and will continue at each location for a period of six months, unless the union and management at the national level agree to extend the timeframe.

This MOU was established out of necessity: The USPS decision to condense dispatch windows has made it hard to find eight hours of continuous work for drivers. In addition, postal managers have made it clear that they plan to terminate and shut down quite a few PVS operations throughout the country.

Let us review this point by point.

The pilot program will be used to determine the feasibility of modifying work rules.

The parties at the national level will decide how many facilities participate in the pilot.

Presently, two sites are under consideration for the pilot program. (One is considered mid-size, and the other is small.)

The real change to work rules concerns drivers' schedules. Item #3 permits schedules to be extended up to 12 hours to accrue 8 hours of work. All pilot schedules will be agreed upon by the national parties, not local management.

Work may be combined with other crafts to create an 8-hour assignment. These assignments also could be extended to 9, 10, 11, and 12 hours.

A significant benefit of the MOU is that no transfers of PVS operations to Highway Contract Routes ("mode conversions") will occur at the pilot sites. Some local union MVS directors have said they would rather see the operation contracted out and excessed from the building than participate in the pilot program. The MVS national officers respect that position, but we think that many drivers would rather stay in their homes and deal with an extended workday than uproot their families and try to sell their houses in a depressed housing market.

The decision is up to the individual locals. Locals that do not wish to participate will not be forced to do so; they will go through mode conversion. Be aware, however, that, given the opportunity, the USPS will eliminate all PVS jobs in an installation. Keep in mind that in two successive five-year plans, the USPS cited the elimination of PVS as an important goal. The threat is real and we have already lost a number of PVS operations.

Hopefully, we can convince the

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

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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.





by Michael  
McCain,  
MPWU  
Education Dir.

## Education & Research Report

# 2009 Educational Conference Is Ready To Teach

Hello Brothers and Sisters,  
The Educational Conference for 2009 is in Bay City and is fast approaching. The State has set up some very good classes so we can move forward in arming our officers and stewards with the knowledge they need to tackle management. In this edition of the Messenger, you will find information regarding which classes will

be offered. It is very important now more than ever, that we look to our National Business Agents for guidance and find out what is winning grievances and what more do we need to do to assist them so they can win.

I find it very disturbing that we are losing employees at an alarming rate but yet management has not down sized one bit. What I see happening now is they are making positions for supervisors to put them in charge of Attendance and

Discipline. They are doing this because they know management did not get there wish for there early retirement debacle, so now they need to move the bulls eye to discipline so they can down size that way.

In these troubled times I find it very difficult sometimes not to think of the children of our future. You have children caught in the cross fire with parents losing there jobs, having to relocate or losing everything they have. I just wish kids could be kids but in today's economy and the attack on the Labor movement we need to educate the young and

help them when we can. Kelly Willinski MPWU Auxiliary President is going to be taking care of our kids during this convention and they are going to teach them what a union can do for their family.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Bay City. In advance of it though, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the MPWU elected officials and all the of those that will be teaching on June 11, 12, & 13 at Educational Conference, especially while they prepare for this endeavor.

Yours in Solidarity.

## House Approves Bill To Give Sick-Leave Credit To FERS Retirees

APWU Web News Article #038-09, April 1, 2009

The House of Representatives approved legislation on April 1 that would give employees covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) credit for unused sick leave when calculating their retirement benefits. The Federal Retirement Reform Act of 2009 (H.R. 1804), introduced by House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-NY), was approved by a voice vote. Under current law, employees who retire under FERS receive no compensation for their accrued sick leave balance; employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) get credit for unused sick leave when they retire.

In addition to the FERS sick leave credit, the bill contains a number of other provisions the APWU supports. These include:

- Automatic enrollment of new employees into the Thrift Savings Plan. Under current law, employees are required to file Form TSP-1 to make contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan. If H.R. 1804 becomes law new employees will be automatically enrolled in the TSP.

- A "qualified" Roth contribution program. The bill would permit TSP participants to contribute after-tax income to their retirement plan instead of pre-tax contributions. This option,

which has been in use in the private sector for a number of years, allows employees who make after-tax contributions to withdraw money tax-free upon retirement.

- Deposit refunds for FERS Employees. Under current law, CSRS employees who leave the USPS or other federal agencies and withdraw their retirement contributions can re-deposit those funds at a later date and be credited for their previous years of service; FERS employees cannot. H.R.1804 gives FERS employees the same right to re-deposit withdrawn funds and to be credited for previous service.

The focus for correcting these FERS inequities will now shift to the United States Senate, where they may be considered as part of a bill providing the Food and Drug Administration with wider authority to regulate tobacco products.

A similar House bill (H.R. 1256) sponsored by Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), incorporates many of the provisions of H.R. 1804, and would give the FDA additional authority to regulate tobacco products.

[H.R. 958, introduced by Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) and Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), which was mentioned in the APWU Legislative Priorities brochure published earlier this year, also includes many of the provisions of H.R. 1804.]

## Wheels And Wrenches

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USPS to return subcontracted work to PVS. Item #7 of the MOU stipulates that consideration will be given to returning work that has been previously subcontracted in order to determine the efficiencies of combining such work with PVS schedules.

The bottom line is this: Except for one or two locations, if your local does not choose to participate in the pilot, you will not be forced to do so; be forewarned, however, that the USPS has gone forward with mode conversions

that take a massive number of jobs from PVS and completely shuttered PVS operations. We expect management to continue this pattern whenever it has the option.

This is just a portion of what our national officers have said. I suggest that if you are interested in the rest of their opinion that you go to the National APWU web site and read it there. Like I said we are not interested in this pilot program.

I am looking forward to seeing all of the craft directors at the Educational Convention in June in Bay City.

## 2009 Michigan Postal Workers Union Educational Convention

**When:** June 11 – 13, 2009

**Where:** Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center  
Bay City, MI 48708

**Costs:** Rooms: \$105 per night  
(plus applicable taxes)  
Registration: \$75.00



### Class Itinerary:

#### Thursday- June 11, 2009

- 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. General Session – Cliff Guffey – The future of the Postal Service and APWU
- 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Arbitration (Limited to the first 25 people)
- 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Clerk Craft Q&A
- 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Maintenance Craft Q&A
- 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Motor Vehicle Craft Q&A

#### Friday – June 12, 2009

- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Arbitration (cont.)
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Maintenance
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Article 12
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. OWCP
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Postal Press & Hatch Act Information
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Computer & Excel Class (Limited to the first 20 people – Bring Laptop with you with Microsoft Excel loaded)
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Arbitration (cont.)
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Maintenance
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Article 12
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. OWCP
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Michigan Office of Service to Seniors
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Children's Auxiliary Workshop
- 6:00 p.m. Reception (Cash Bar)
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner & Speakers

#### Saturday – June 13, 2009

- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Arbitration (cont.)
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Maintenance Q&A
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Retirement
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Function 4
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Beginner / Advanced Stewards
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Children's Auxiliary Workshop
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Arbitration (cont.)
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Function 4
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. MVS – Article 39
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Clerk Q&A
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Beginner / Advanced Stewards
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Retirement Benefits & Info
- 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Children's Auxiliary Workshop

## Area 1's Report



by Larry Moyer,  
Area 1 Director

# Is The Postmasters Doing Your Work?

It has been some time since I wrote an article for the Michigan Messenger. The following are issues that we need to be vigilant about.

**Postmasters Performing Bargaining Unit Work** — During a recent District Labor Management meeting one of our POOM's made the statement that "The first eight hours of work belong to the postmaster". Not true. One must note that this POOM is the Former President of the League of Postmasters Michigan Branch (which explains why he would make such a comment, he has a constituency to protect!) In National Level Arbitration Awards arbitrators have ruled that if clerks have historically performed the work it is to remain so. I just received a very good arbitration award out of Iowa, in which the clerk had evidence in the form of e mails that the postmaster wrote crowing about the fact she is doing more and more bargaining unit work. Many of you clerks in a smaller office Level 20 and below may receive e-mail access from your postmaster to answer e-mails in the postmaster's absence. I would be extremely careful with any e mails from your postmaster that explain what your postmaster is doing so they can not use this as a reason to remove you from the USPS. If your hours are cut, call your Area Director or steward.

**Limited Duty Letter Carriers Performing Clerk Work** — This has been a hot button issue for me for years. Our National Union has sat on it hands with regard to this in my opinion. I have filed grievances on this over the years only to have the Business Agents settle the grievance that management has an obligation under Federal Law to provide work for injured carriers. I was contacted by a clerk in the last two weeks and she contends that management is intending as part of the National Reassessment Process to have injured carriers work 2 hours in one office, travel to another office and work 2 hours, travel to a third office and work 2 hours, travel to another office and work another 2 hours performing clerk distribution tasks for a total of 8 hours of work. I have confirmed this from a postmaster of an office that I trust that is what the Postmaster has heard is true. This will drastically hurt the PTF clerks in the small offices I am very pleased to see that the Detroit District area Local has filed a lawsuit against the USPS that management is excessing clerks out of their stations, branches and offices and leaving the limited duty carriers performing clerk craft duties. Under Article 12 these carriers are to return to the letter carrier craft PRIOR to the excessing of clerks. I have a grievance pending on this issue when the excessed clerks out of my office. I hope the Detroit District Area Local wins the lawsuit! When and if this occurs, call your Area Director or steward.

**"Wack job" Postmaster in Area 3** — I was asked by our State President

to handle problems in an office in Area 3 (481 Offices). I had worked out a settlement at step 2 that the postmaster would follow Article 37 with regard to porting bids until residual vacancies occur. Then these vacancies would be offered to the Detroit District for the excessed clerks to bid into. This postmaster could care less about the National Agreement and what it states. She is unfortunately supported by the POOM's in Detroit. When management fails to adhere to a settlement I make with them, I do not re-grieve the same issue. I file Bargaining in Bad Faith charges with the National Labor Relations Board. We will see how the NLRB feels about BARGAINING in BAD FAITH with the Union.

**REMOVALS** — In my home office we have had a round of excessing coupled with the new language in Article 37 that all clerks are converted to Full Time in 200 or more Man Year Offices. A clerk working tour I bid on posted bids and was unsuccessful. A window Clerk was excessed out of Troy to another office. Management posted the window bid, no clerk's bid on it; the unencumbered regular was assigned

on the basis of juniority to this bid. She has three children under the age of 8 and her husband works odd hours. She did not want to work tour 2. She went off to the Sales and Service Associate training and failed. Management in their infinite wisdom issued a Notice of Removal to her. She was in a pay status for 30 days and is now unemployed. Hindsight being 20/20 bid on a job even if you do not want it, if you fail under Article 37, management has to return you to your prior duties. Management would not allow this clerk to retake the window training and exam. (Unlike another office that I was able to get the clerk who failed to retake window training), nor would management offer this clerk a reassignment. So we will see what will happen in arbitration. Be wary of this I believe we will see more of this in the future as mail volume decreases and bids disappear.

The other removal concerns a clerk who upon a customer complaint e-mailed a Business Reply Permit holder and told him that their mail was backed up. Hindsight being 20/20, do NOT share internal issues with our customers. This permit

holder contacted the OIC. Management brought the clerk in for a Pre Disciplinary Interview and he admitted that he was being truthful with the customer. I thought the clerk would be issued at best a Letter of Warning. Instead he was issued a Notice of Removal. As of the time I write this a proposed settlement is in the works to bring this clerk back to work. If you need to contact postal customer do not say anything negative about the post office on an official USPS e-mail account. I would refer the customer by phone message to the postmaster or supervisor. (They make the big money to handle these problems, not us).

I see these actions along with the end of Tour 2 in our Processing plants as a way to get rid of employees. We are over complement and if they can trip us up and remove us that is one less employee needed to be excessed elsewhere and one less employee on the work rolls. Be careful.

Until next time if you have a problem or question, call your Area Director or steward.

In Solidarity.

## Employee Free Choice Act

Contact your Congressperson and Senator to urge passage of this important legislation.

Passing an Employee Free Choice Act is one of the top legislative priorities of the labor movement and the American Postal Workers Union. It would give American workers greater freedom to make their own choices about joining unions and bargaining for better wages, benefits, and working conditions. An Employee Free Choice law would:

- o Recognize workers' freedom to form unions when a majority of employees sign authorization cards designating a union as their bargaining representative;
- o Encourage employers to bargain in good faith to achieve a first contract once a union has been formed;
- o Authorize court orders to stop employers from firing or threatening workers who favor unions; and
- o Stiffen penalties against employers that illegally fire or discriminate against employees who engage in union organizing activities.

### CARD-CHECK V. NLRB ELECTIONS

Employees would be able to choose between two options for gaining union recognition:

- o A "card check" procedure;
- o or The NLRB election process.

The "card check" procedure, under which workers sign forms indicating support for a union, is permitted under current law, but only if the employer agrees. Most employers force workers to undergo elections administered

by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

During NLRB-run elections, employers routinely wage anti-union propaganda campaigns, resulting in elections that are coercive and hostile, rather than free and fair.

Employers frequently intimidate, harass, reassign, or even fire workers who support the formation of a union. As the law stands now, even if every employee at a plant signs a card supporting union representation, the employer can still require an election.

An EFCA would protect workers' freedom of choice by requiring employers to bargain with a union authorized by a majority through the card-check procedure.

### REAL PENALTIES

An Employee Free Choice Act would put real teeth in the laws that are designed to protect workers, by adopting stronger and quicker penalties for retaliation by employers against employees who attempt to organize a union or obtain a first contract.

Currently, penalties are so minimal that employers routinely treat them as a minor "cost of doing business." Remedies for affected workers often come far too late.

An Employee Free Choice law would require the NLRB to seek a federal court injunction against an employer when there is reasonable cause to believe that the employer has fired or discriminated against employees during a union organizing campaign.

### FIRST CONTRACTS

The 2007 version of the bill would have encouraged employers to negotiate in good faith to achieve a first contract

within 90 days: Failing that, it would have required them to participate in mediation.

Under the Employee Free Choice Act of 2007, if agreement on a first contract has not been reached after 90 days of bargaining, the employer or employees would have been able to request mediation by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

If there was no agreement after 30 days of mediation, the dispute would have gone to arbitration to produce a contract that would bind the parties for two years.

Fifty percent of work sites where workers choose a union still don't have a contract two years after the election. Under current law, management can undermine employees' collective-bargaining rights through bad-faith bargaining; there is virtually no legal deterrent to such conduct.

These reforms would help level the playing field for workers who want to form unions.

### CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

The House passed the Employee Free Choice Act in 2007 with a solid majority, but a vote to pass it in the Senate was blocked by antiunion conservatives. As a result, the bill must be re-introduced in the 111th Congress, and the fight to make it law begins anew.

The outlook for making the Employee Free Choice Act the law of the land improved considerably with the recent election of President Barack Obama and more Senate and House members who support it. If Congress passes an Employee Free Choice Act,

President Obama has pledged to sign it into law.



by John  
Smeeckens,  
Veterans  
Director

## Veteran's Report

# Some Things To Think About

### MEMORIAL DAY

Please take a moment on May 25<sup>th</sup> to stop and bow your head in honored respect for those Veterans' who have given the ultimate sacrifice to keep this country free, and have given us the ultimate freedom to pursue the lifestyles and choices that we have chosen. This is the holiday that starts off the summer months, vacations, BBQ's, family reunions, graduations, etc...,etc...,etc. These freedoms that were earned with blood sweat, and tears. So take time, no make time, to take a minute with your family, with your friends, or by yourself to bow your head in honored reverence and silence and say Thank You to those special Men & Women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. It will only take a minute. Have a safe, great, and happy Memorial Day.

### REFLECTION THOUGHTS

The average age of the military man is 19 years. He is a short haired, tight muscled kid who, under normal circumstances is considered by society as half man, half boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, not old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country. He never really cared much for work and he would rather wax his own car than wash his Dad's, but he has never collected unemployment either. He's a recent High School graduate; he was probably an average student, pursued some form of sports activities, drives a ten year old jalopy, and has a steady girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left, or swears to be waiting when he returns home from half a world away. He listens to rock and roll or hip-hop or rap or jazz or swing and possibly even a 155mm howitzer. He is 10 or 15 pounds lighter now than when he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk. He has trouble concentrating, thus letter writing is a pain for him, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and reassemble it in less time in the dark. He can recite to you the nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must. He digs foxholes and latrines and can apply first aid like a professional. He can march until he is told to stop, or stop until he is told to march. He obeys orders instantly and without hesitation, but he is not without spirit or individual dignity. He is self-sufficient. He has two sets of fatigues: he washes one and wears the other. He keeps his canteens full and his feet dry. He sometimes forgets to brush his teeth, but never to clean his rifle. He can cook his own meals, mend his own clothes, and fix his own hurts. If you're thirsty, he'll share his water with you; if you are hungry, his

food. He may even share his ammunition with you in the midst of battle when you run low, but he'll remind you to pack more the next time. He has learned to use his hands like weapons and his weapons are like they were his hands. He can save your life - or take it, because that's his job. He will often do twice the work of a civilian, draw half the pay, and still find ironic humor in it all. He has seen more suffering and death than he should have in his short lifetime. He has wept in public and in private, for friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed. He feels every note of the National Anthem vibrate through his body while at rigid attention, while tempering the burning desire to "square-away" those around him who haven't bothered to stand, remove their hat, or even stop talking. In an odd twist, day in and day out, far from home, he defends their right to be disrespectful.

Just as his Father, Grandfather, and Great-grandfather did, he is paying the price for our freedom. Beardless or not, he is not a boy. He is the American Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years. He has asked nothing in return, except our friendship and understanding. Remember him, always, for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

And now we even have women over there in danger, doing their part in this tradition of going to War when our nation calls us to do so. So don't think it unrealistic, to change the gender of the masculine terms above, to the feminine terms.

### PRAYER WHEEL

'Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us, Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. Amen. **'After you read this, please stop for a moment and say a prayer for our troops stationed all over the World, sailors on ships, and airmen in the air, and especially for those who may be in harms way because of the area of operations they are in. Of all the gifts you could give a U.S. Airman, Soldier, Coastguardsman, Marine, or Sailor, prayer is the very best one.**(source, the internet in numerous varying forms)

### FAVOR TIME

I've asked before, now it's time again to ask a favor of all who read this. As you know, the price of stamps is increasing. We all know about the forever stamp. Well here is what I'd like you to do. Send a letter requesting that the **Purple Heart Stamp** be considered as a Forever Stamp. Real easy, not a lot of verbiage, just a short note to;

CITIZENS' STAMP ADVISORY COMMITTEE, UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, 1735 N. LYNN ST. STE 5013, ARLINGTON, VA

22209-6432. Thank You!!!

### THANK YOU

I would like to take a minute to Thank our President, Mr. Gary VanHoogstraten, for his supportive and affable words, in the February 2009 *Michigan Messenger* (Volume 41 Number 137), in regards to me and my position as your Veterans' Director for the MPWU. It was very uplifting, and I felt good to know that he felt that way about what I'm trying to do for my fellow Union Brothers and Sisters who are Military Veterans." I will continue to give it my all, and keep you abreast of as much information as possible that will help you, the Veteran, and the families of Veterans'. Please pass on the information to

those Veterans' who are not fortunate enough to have the resources where someone is keeping them informed of the myriad of issues that affect Veterans', and their families, continually. And remember, I can always be reached by calling my local at 248-543-3262, and they will get the message to me. Or call the Royal Oak VMF between 0600 & 1400, Monday through Friday at 248-546-7146. E-mail, I'm really not that computer efficient, so I would rather have you call me. But I do have three daughters who are trying to instruct me on the finer points of the internet and its use. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.



### American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

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From the Office of Susan M. Carney  
Human Relations Director

Document was created for APWU web posting - please visit [www.apwu.org](http://www.apwu.org) to open in-house hyperlinks.

### APWU Member Needs Help DO IT FOR GEORGE

APWU members nationwide are being called upon to help a fellow APWU member. Terre Haute Area Local member, George Goetschel has been diagnosed with a life-threatening condition. Receiving a marrow transplant could make all the difference for George and his family, but the odds of finding a match are extremely rare. Family testing, a local donor drive and a complete search of the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) Registry have all proven to be unsuccessful.

Among us, however, there is still hope, with more than 200,000 APWU members and over 650,000 postal employees, one of us could be his match - possibly the only one capable of saving George's life. Don't miss out on the opportunity to give the gift of life. Do it to be the one - Do it for George.

APWU has coordinated with the USPS and the National Marrow Donor Program to host a nationwide marrow registry drive for George from April 1 - June 30, 2009. The usual tissue typing fee charged by the National Marrow Donor Program to join their registry is being funded through the Postal Service's *Delivering the Gift of Life* Campaign so there will be no cost to join as long as the potential donors follow the prescribed guidelines listed below.

All postal employees, their spouses and dependents between the ages of 18 and 60 years old, who have not previously joined the NMDP Registry and who meet the [medical eligibility guidelines](#), can participate. If you're uncertain if you are already registered with NMDP, you can complete their online form or call 1-800-627-7692 (1-800-Marrow-2) to inquire. Response to online inquiries generally takes 1-3 business days.

Once you determine your eligibility, contact your designated USPS District Coordinator to state your interest in becoming a potential donor. Individuals whose postal district is not listed can still volunteer by contacting Sue Carney, APWU National Human Relations Director at [scarney@apwu.org](mailto:scarney@apwu.org) or (202) 842-4271 or by sending an e-mail to [marrowcampaign@usps.gov](mailto:marrowcampaign@usps.gov). All potential donors will be provided a Buccal Swab Kit and are required to complete a registration form, a health history questionnaire and an agreement to join the NMDP Registry, all of which will be provided when you receive your kit.

If you are determined to be a lifesaving match for George or another person in need, all APWU career and transitional employees are eligible to receive up to 7 days of paid administrative leave to cover qualification and donation. [MOU]

You are encouraged to visit these links to learn more about the [procedure](#), and the importance of [keeping your commitment](#) if you are determined to be a match for someone. George's situation is urgent so please don't delay.

### MEET GEORGE GOETSCHEL

George is a proud APWU member of the Terre Haute Area Local (IN). He has been with the Postal Service for 34 years and is a mail processor. He is also a veteran, serving in the U.S. Army from 1973 - 1977.

George will be married 26 years this June. He has a daughter who is in college studying to be a veterinarian and a son in high school who is interested in sports medicine. Both are set to graduate this year. His oldest son is in the Navy.

George was diagnosed with cancer in September of 2008. At first he said he was terrified but after a time he found he has a lot of good friends; at church, at work, and in the small town that he lives in. George says, "Prayer and friendship are the only things you have to keep you going. I am blessed. Now it's 'wait and see'".

March, 2009

## Retiree's Report



by Al  
LaBrecque,  
Retiree's Chapter  
President

# Retirement Involvement

**Education Convention:** In the planning stages at this writing, there are tentatively going to be two retiree/retirement programs on the education agenda. The Ed Convention is being held in Bay City at the Doubletree Hotel-Bay City Riverfront, June 11-13. Class schedules should appear elsewhere in this issue.

We have requested that the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging to conduct a half-day program. This is a federally and state funded program which basically is a clearinghouse guide to agencies and services for seniors. The Director is appointed by the Governor. The program is designed to educate and inform Local and State Retiree Chapter leaderships, and for State and Local Union officers whose duties include Human Relations. This class is open to anyone who wishes to attend, including delegate guests and spouses.

A one-day Retirement Seminar will be conducted by 480-481 V.P., and national retirement advocate, Joe Gordon, featuring a power point program which addresses both CSRS and FERS. This program is designed to educate and inform active employees contemplating retirement, and Local officers who administer retiree matters at the Local level, and a worthwhile class for members who are wisely planning retirement even years ahead. Brother Gordon does an excellent job of presentation.

No News...is not necessarily good news! We've been advised through various means that due to 'temporary' financial constraints, that there will be no March/April APWU bi-monthly magazine, The American Postal Worker. Thus, the membership is left further out of touch with the national Union leadership. Communications should be the last thing to go, in my estimation. This temporary suspension of our national news magazine designed to keep the membership informed is another step away from the value of the printed word, hard copy, if you will, that the late APWU Pres. Moe Biller prized in his famous (or infamous) "Communicating With You, The Members" missives. First, the APWU News Service Bulletin faded into oblivion, now this. The APWU is relying more, and more on the APWU website to communicate with the membership in the field. In doing so, they are getting farther and farther away from the rank & file.

I must admit that the new newspaper format of the Michigan Messenger kind of took me aback. The important thing is that it's being published, and content is more important than whether it's on slick paper or newsprint. If it's cost effective, I can live with it. Back in December, Editor Mike Long asked for input as to continuing with a published *Michigan Messenger*, or consider going to publishing the "M.M." on the MPWU website. While I completely understand

the cost of mailing our Union publication is a concern, there are overriding factors that I believe justify the cost and effort. First, and most importantly, I am still convinced that at least a majority of our retired members are not computer savvy, or even own a computer. And, just how many of us, active or retired members, would go the MPWU.com website to read the "Messenger" even if they have the means? Brother Long, to his credit, did observe that we are postal workers and that the U.S. Mails are our livelihood. That we should support our own service is a no-brainer. Otherwise, that would be tantamount to a UAW member buying a Nissan.

**Medicare Diabetics:** Buy American! As I have advised in past columns, if you are diabetic and a Medicare recipient, you can have your physician write a prescription so that you can receive one pair of shoes per year through a Medicare provider who will measure and fit you and provide extra comfortable inserts. The shoes are at little, and usually no cost to you. Oxford styles are unattractive and clunky with smooth soles not conducive to walking on snow and ice, so I opt for sneakers. I discovered that most of the tennis shoes I looked at were "Made In China" (for Pete's sake), except one; New Balance "Made IN USA". If you are a diabetic who takes advantage of this benefit, I urge you to "Buy American - Buy New Balance".

**Dues Increase:** Retiree members should have received your OPM notice that APWU Retiree's Dept. dues increased \$1. per month beginning in January, '09. Whether you supported that increase, or not, it's a done deal for now. Retirees belonging to Local or State Retiree Chapters will have that portion of their dues rebated to their Chapters for needed operating revenue. The remainder of the retiree membership dues that is not rebated to the 36 Local and 4 State Chapters, is dedicated to a Retiree's Dept. organizing fund. How effective that will be in expanding membership and Chapters remains to be seen. Effective at the same time (1-1-09), we have been advised that the APWU, presumably Pres. Burrus and/or the National Executive Board, terminated the one-year free retiree membership for new members. I've been told that it wasn't effective in signing new members, and there were problems coordinating the commencement of dues deductions after one year with OPM. It's my considered opinion the one-year free membership was the ONLY organizing tool we had! From what I'm getting from the field, is that it was, in fact, effective in signing new members.

It will be enlightening to see how the organizing revenues will be applied. I am convinced that the legislative arena is where we need to be concentrating our efforts. Congress is where the action is in these troubled economic times, and where our priority retiree legislation languishes;

Windfall Elimination Provision/Government Pension Offset, Premium Conversion, and other major pieces of legislation that would profoundly affect active and retired postal/federal workers, both pro and con. In hindsight, perhaps we should have considered dedicating a percentage, like 50-50, between the organizing fund and a Retiree's Dept. legislative action fund. Then, the \$1. dues increase being shouldered by our Members-At-Large would benefit all retired members, not just Chapters.

### JUST A THOUGHT . . .

**Retiree Legislation:** Whether you're an auto worker, in manufacturing, supplier, related spin off jobs, or one of the hundreds of thousands of jobless in the country, Union or not, contract negotiations have come down to having to limit concessions as far as possible. Nearly every aspect of the job market and economy is tied to the actions being taken in the U.S. Congress, and that's where we had better be turning all our efforts. All the talk about "stimulus" and tax cuts for the middle class to get our economy moving again gives us leverage to apply that principle to our priority postal/federal retiree legislation.

**HR 235:** "The Social Security Fairness Act of 2009" to repeal WEP/GPO for CSRS retirees who retired after 1986 is that kind of legislation. We need to ramp up our efforts to Members of Congress to cosponsor and actively push HR 235, which has been referred to the House Ways & Means Committee, and companion bill in the U.S. Senate; S.484, referred to the Senate Committee on Finance. If Congress is going to have serious debate on Social Security "reform", then we must insist our elected Members of Congress include HR 235 and S.484 in that debate! Repeal of WEP/GPO would be a true, ongoing stimulus. Currently, Michigan Congressional Delegation members cosponsoring HR 235 are: Bart Stupak (D-1st Dist), Candice Miller (R-10th Dist.), and Thad McCotter (R-11th Dist.). Neither Senator Carl Levin (D) nor Senator Debbie Stabenow (D) have signed on to S.484 yet. Maybe we just need to ask 'em, 'ya think?! If you don't see your Congressperson's name here, you know what you need to do! If your District's House member is one of those cosponsoring HR.235, be sure to THANK them!

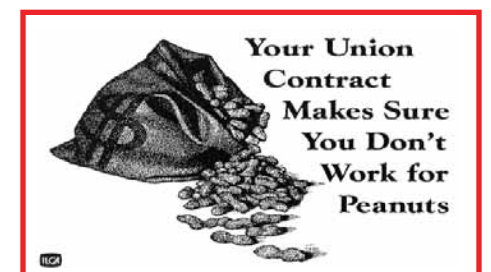
**S.491:** "The Federal and Military Health Care Act" . . . Premium Conversion...has also been introduced in the U.S. Senate, with a companion bill HR 1203, in the U.S. House. This affects ALL CSRS/FERS and Military retirees by permitting them to deduct their FEHBP health care premiums from pre-tax annuity earnings, a privilege enjoyed by active employees since 2000. It is up to all of us to contact our two U.S. Senators; Stabenow and Levin, and Michigan Congressional Delegation to the 111th Congress that; this IS a tax cut! Talk is cheap! Action is what

is needed, by US and THEM!

**Stimulus:** At this writing, this is all that is known about the much ballyhooed "stimulus package", and how it affects CSRS and FERS retirees: There are provisions in the stimulus law that impacts retirees. This is what we have learned thus far: CSRS retirees, not also covered by Social Security or a wage earner, will be eligible for a one-time \$250. tax credit on their 2009 federal income tax return. Social Security annuitants who were covered by S.S. during the months of Nov. '08, Dec. '08, or Jan. '09, and who are not also wage earners, will receive a one-time \$250. increase in their monthly benefit. Wage earners not covered by CSRS or S.S. will have reduced withholding. It remains unclear how the status of CSRS annuitants who also receive a small S.S. monthly benefit, as well as annuitants from either or both systems who have had limited wage earnings during the counting period, are affected. On the surface, it appears there may be a "doughnut hole" for CSRS annuitants who also receive a S.S. benefit, including S.S. reduced by the WEP. Not specifically addressed is whether or not CSRS annuitants who also receive S.S. will see a reduction in federal tax withholding from those systems. And, if a person tries to supplement their retirement income, even if it's a minimum waged part-time job, you will receive reduced federal income tax deductions. Wow! From our sketchy information on the stimulus, it would appear that FERS annuitants would be treated as S.S. annuitants and eligible for the \$250. one-time benefit, Don't spend it before you see it!

**Requiem:** Retired Traverse City Area Local clerk, Tom Parks, passed away unexpectedly on March 9, 2009 at age 56. Tom was a veteran U.S. Army paratrooper who lost both legs in Vietnam for which he received the Purple Heart. Tom was active in his T.C. Local for his nearly 20 years service, attending MPWU State Conventions as a delegate and District meetings. Tom was wheelchair bound, but definitely not "confined". There never was any "poor me" from Tom, whom I viewed as a profile in courage. Tom and the late MPWU Pres. and NBA., Clyde Hartshorn, also a Purple Heart Vietnam vet, had a special relationship in common. Brother Parks was also a member of the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. We offer our sincere condolences to Tom's wife; Tina, his Children, Family and many friends. "Eternal rest grant unto him 'O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon him. Amen."

Be Strong!



# The Postal Service Is Getting Greener

by Marilyn Loeser

The Postal Service is getting greener. With the addition of 1,844 recycling bins in Post Office lobbies, the total now stands at more than 5,900 nationwide.

The read, respond, recycle bins are designed to encourage PO Box customers to open their mail (read), take whatever action is necessary (respond) and simply place the rest of their mail into the bin (recycle). The recycling bins are locked with a key and the opening is slim – about the width of a news magazine.

Not only is this a convenient, environmentally responsible alternative for PO Box customers, but customers on mail delivery routes can stop by a participating Post Office and place their discarded mail, catalogs and advertisements into a read, respond, recycle bin as well.

Recycling helps divert paper waste from landfills, reducing the amount of virgin fiber from trees needed to produce more paper and eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from solid waste disposal.

This program has been thoroughly

tested and presents no risk to mail security or customer privacy and does not effect postal operations or costs, according to USPS Sustainability Vice President Sam Pulcrano.

“The message today is simple. Mail is recyclable,” Pulcrano said. It’s also smart.

In 2008, more than \$12 million was generated by selling recyclables as raw materials, and diverting tons of wastepaper, cardboard, cans, plastics and other materials from landfills.

## MORE GREEN INITIATIVES

Every year, the Postal Service purchases more than \$200 million in products containing recycled content. Many of the containers used to deliver and process mail are made from recycled materials along with stamped envelopes, postcards and stamp booklets. Even the adhesive used on postage stamps is biodegradable.

And, the Postal Service is the only shipping company in the nation to achieve Cradle to Cradle Certification at the silver level from MBDC (McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry)



for its Priority Mail and Express Mail packages and envelopes based on the environmental attributes of the materials used in the packaging.

Cradle to Cradle is a fundamental shift from designing products and systems based on the take-make-waste model of the last century — cradle to grave. Cradle to Cradle products and

services are designed on patterns found in nature, eliminating the concept of waste entirely, and creating an abundance that is healthy and sustaining.

A complete list of participating Post Offices with read, respond, recycle bins can be found at [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com), using the word “mail” in the search engine. The list is sorted by ZIP Code.

## Start Here!

### ELM 512.923 & 543.42.f Leave Buy-Back

Under the provisions of the Federal Employees Compensation Act, current employees may be permitted to buy back sick and/or annual leave they used while awaiting adjudication of their cases. Please remember, the request will only be honored for leave was taken before the claim was approved

The buy-back must be initiated within 1 year of the return to duty, or within 1 year of the date OWCP approved the claim, whichever is later.

Ex. If your actual pay for one week is \$1000 straight rate, \$100 Sunday premium and \$40 night differential, you could be eligible for \$1140 in OWCP compensation for each week of leave you buy back.

**However**, you only get 75% of that figure if you have a dependant (including wife), and 66.6% if you don't have a dependant — but, taxes are not withheld — bonus, right?

At this time, OWCP sends Eagan a check equal to your compensation. If it's more than what Eagan said it would take to buy back your leave, you'll receive a refund from Eagan. If OWCP compensation is less than what Eagan said it would take, then you'll owe and will receive a corrected invoice that must be paid before having your leave restored.

*Clear as mud?*

**Forms needed — available online at [wmal.org](http://wmal.org) (click on Workers Comp, FECA)**

- CA 7** Claim for Compensation
- CA 7a** Time Analysis Form (details each day leave was used)
- CA 7b** Leave Buy-Back Worksheet; Certification and Election (management completes most of this form).

## Leave Buy-Back Process

**Keep in mind**, the leave you buy back is converted into LWOP. For every 80 hours of LWOP, you lose AL and SL equal to what you earn in one pay period. See ELM 512.923.c.

Disclaimer: This flow chart is meant to be a basic guide. Seek professional advice from the USPS or OWCP before proceeding.

**Jennifer Amos, Western Michigan Area Local and Michigan Postal Worker Union**

Your postmaster/supervisor will certify and forward completed forms to an Injury Comp Specialist in your district. You will soon get form CA 7b back from the that injury comp specialist with an estimate of what it may cost to buy back your leave. It's just an estimate; the actual cost will be determined later after OWCP (Dept of Labor) determines how much compensation you will collect from them. If you want to proceed with the buy back, you must submit the signed CA 7b. If you don't sign it, the process will discontinue.

Your signed form CA 7b goes to the USPS Eagan Acct Office where they will generate an invoice with an exact amount you'll need to buy-back your leave. **DO NOT** pay this amount — you'll receive a corrected invoice later after OWCP pays their share. At this point you are still able to withdraw your request.

Eagan calculates the amount required to buy back your leave using straight rate, without premiums, since that's what you were originally paid when you used the leave. The cool thing is, you are given credit for non-refundable taxes already paid.

Ex. If you were initially paid \$1000 for one week of annual/sick leave and \$250 was withheld for taxes, you only repay \$750 to buy back that same \$1000 worth of leave.

Once Eagan determines you need \$750 to buy back your leave, they send that figure to OWCP.

**Remember: Eagan uses straight rate to assess what you owe while OWCP calculates actual wage loss. Don't get the two methods mixed up.**

OWCP takes the figures from page two of the CA 7 you filed to determine how much you are eligible to collect. If you work nights and weekends you will receive straight pay as well as premiums, (night differential and Sunday premium). **BUT — NO OT.** Of course, if you don't work nights and weekends you'll simply get straight rate without any premiums (see ex. above).

# Various News And Information

## USPS SPENT \$78 MILLION ON RELOCATIONS IN 2008

Figures released by the US Postal Service show that the organization spent \$78.4 million on relocating employees in the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2008. Of that, almost half, or \$37.9 million went to "Residence Purchase and/or Sale/Lease". The USPS home purchase program for relocated employees has been a subject of controversy since it was revealed that the USPS had spent \$1.2 million to purchase the home of a South Carolina postmaster who had taken a voluntary lateral transfer to a position in Texas.

Just under \$15 million of the home purchase funds money went to Headquarters and Area staff, which account for less than four thousand of the postal service's 632,000 career employees. A similar amount went to postmasters and supervisors, who make up a much larger share, about 54,000 employees, of the workforce. Employees of the Inspection Service and the Office of the Inspector General, about 3,900 total staff, got \$3.4 million in home purchase benefits, down from almost \$7 million the prior year. Home purchase benefits for clerks, carriers and mail handlers came to just over three hundred thousand dollars.

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## BURRUS UPDATE #04-09, MARCH 20, 2009

In response to significant deficits caused by a substantial reduction in mail volume, the Postal Service has requested and received approval to offer Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) to 150,000 employees nationwide.

Retirement is a personal matter, and the union defers to the decisions of employees who meet the qualifications. However, the APWU continues to challenge the Postal Service's authority to offer VER without including severance pay.

The Postal Service also has announced plans to close six District offices and to reduce administrative personnel by 15 percent. A new ratio of supervisors to employees will be adopted, which will decrease the number of postal supervisors.

The APWU takes no pleasure in the reduction of management positions, but I have repeatedly warned management that the affect of declining mail volume cannot be focused exclusively on craft employees. Over recent years, tens of thousands of craft jobs have been abolished, while the number of management positions has remained unchanged. Employees simply will not accept one-sided complement reductions.

The craft employees, especially those represented by the APWU and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association, already

have experienced severe cutbacks. In the Clerk Craft, part-time employees have suffered significant work-hour reductions, and thousands of full-time employees have been notified of excessing — often hundreds of miles away. Through "route evaluations," many Rural Letter Carriers have suffered salary reductions of up to \$8,000 over the past two years.

I have repeatedly informed postal management that workers understand that the severity of the financial crisis makes change inevitable; however, the sacrifices cannot be limited to a few.

William Burrus  
President

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Editor's NOTE: Isn't it funny. Management in the Postal Service doesn't give a damn when it comes to breaking our contract. However, management at other companies have a problem breaking theirs. Especially when it means that they won't be receiving a huge bonus. One bright spot though, even the senior Republican Senator says that contracts are valid. The following is a News Excerpt.

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## MILLIONS IN AIG BONUSES DRAW CHORUS OF OUTRAGE

From one Sunday talk show to the next, they tore into the contracts that American International Group asserted had to be honored, to the tune of about \$165 million and payable to executives by Sunday — part of a larger total payout reportedly valued at \$450 million. The company has benefited from more than \$170 billion in a federal rescue.

Added Lawrence Summers, Obama's top economic adviser: "The easy thing would be to just say ... off with their heads, violate the contracts. But you have to think about the consequences of breaking contracts for the overall system of law, for the overall financial system."

Summers said Geithner used all his power, "both legal and moral, to reduce the level of these bonus payments."

Liddy said the company had entered into the bonus agreements in early 2008 before AIG got into severe financial straits and was forced to obtain a government bailout last fall.

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## DETROIT APWU SUES POSTAL SERVICE OVER IMPROPER EXCESSING, INVOLUNTARY REASSIGNMENT

On March 6, 2009, the American Postal Workers Union, Detroit District Area Local, AFL-CIO filed a complaint against the U.S. Postal Service in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. After reading the complaint it appears that local management did not get the PMG Potter memo on honoring the contract.

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## LETTER CARRIERS' ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE SET FOR MAY 9 THROUGHOUT NATION

Donations Critical as Thousands

Join Hunger Rolls; Effort Will Help Feed Needy Families in All 50 States

NALC announced that the nation's largest food drive to combat hunger will be conducted this year on Saturday, May 9. On that day, letter carriers will collect non-perishable donations from homes as they deliver mail along their postal routes.

The 17th annual NALC National Food Drive to "Stamp Out Hunger" is the largest one-day food drive in the nation. Carriers collected a record 73.1 million pounds of food in last year's drive. The drive is held annually on the second Saturday in May in over 10,000 cities and towns in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

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## USPS CAREER EMPLOYEE HEADCOUNT DOWN 4.4% FROM A YEAR AGO

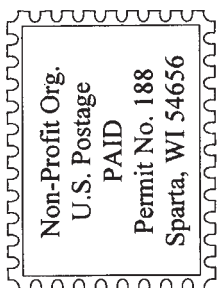
February employment figures filed by the US Postal Service show career staffing levels are down 4.4% from a year ago. The decline of 29,960 was across the board, affecting all employee categories. The largest decline was in the clerk craft, down 6.7% for a loss of 13,405 jobs. The smaller mail handler craft suffered a loss of 3,144 jobs, or 5.5%. There were 10,337 fewer career city carriers, a drop of 4.8%.

Job categories which had shown increases in earlier periods also showed declines in the current report, with Headquarters shedding 4.7% of its positions, or 135 jobs, and the Office of the Inspector General losing 12, or 1%. Non-career transitional carrier jobs were down by 222 positions, or 1.5%. Rural carriers showed the smallest decline, down 137 jobs or 0.2%.

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## HOUSE PASSES FEDERAL RETIREMENT REFORM BILL

The House on April 1 passed H.R. 1804, the Federal Retirement Reform Act of 2009, which, among other things, would give a credit for unused sick leave at the time of retirement to employees enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Currently, FERS employees try to use up sick leave immediately prior to retirement because there is no incentive for them to save it up. Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees already receive credit for unused sick leave. The bill also contains a provision to allow FERS employees who leave the federal government to redeposit annuity funds if they return to federal service. Currently, those employees either cash out their annuity or roll it into a private account. But if they return to federal employment, they are not allowed to redeposit those funds—and they lose credit for prior years for service for the purpose of determining annuity benefits. The bill lets returning FERS employees reinvest their full federal retirement annuity without losing credit for previous years of service. The bill also contains provisions affecting the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Under the bill, all new federal employees would be enrolled in the TSP automatically when they begin employment. Additionally, the bill also establishes within the TSP a Roth IRA option for federal employees.



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