

# Michigan

## MESSENGER

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by Gary  
VanHoogstraten,  
President

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# Buy American Made Products!

The below two articles were discussed and voted on in the recent Michigan State AFL-CIO Legislative Conference. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, the member, through your representative at the convention, for sending me to this. Unlike the other conference before, this was only a one-day conference. Many issues were discussed, but I feel that these are too important not to bring to your attention.

The American flag symbolizes life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for those of us in the United States. However, many of the American flags on the market today are imported, frequently from countries that employ prison labor or other exploited workers. By buying and using these imported American flags contradicts the very meaning of what the flag implies. We should appeal to governing bodies and insist that they generate legislation to ban the import of American US flags and that all Union members support such legislative initiatives.

We must try and buy American made at all time, when and if at all possible. The economic downturn is having a critical impact on every American who is struggling to maintain or find a job in this increasingly difficult environment. Those same Americans are taxpayers who provide the revenue needed to operate essential government services. Congress approved and President Obama signed into law a taxpayer-sponsored economic recovery package that will provide billions of dollars to help economically devastated cities and states. This package immediately provides jobs to millions of out-of-work Americans through considerable infrastructure rebuilding, green energy projects and other projects that will require manufactured components. Taxpayer dollars should be spent to maximize the creation of American jobs and restore the economic vitality of our communities. Any domestically produced products that are purchased with economic recovery plan monies will immediately help struggling American families and will help stabilize the greater economy. Any economic recovery plan spending should, to every extent possible, include a commitment from the State of Michigan, cities, townships and

counties to buy materials, goods and services for projects from companies that are produced within the United States, thus employing the very workers that pay the taxes for the economic recovery plan in the first place. Our Union members should work to maximize the creation of American jobs and restore economic growth and opportunity by spending economic recovery plan funds on products and services that both create jobs and help keep Americans employed. It is also important that we all organize support the purchase of products made and services performed in the United States.

Secondly, Health care in the United States is a national disgrace and in the throes of a crisis of cost, accessibility and quality. Health insurance premiums skyrocketed over 10% in 2008 and more than 80% of all employers increased employee co-payments and premium

contributions. These increases have helped sustain a climate of concessionary bargaining, pushing down wages, causing bitter strikes and lockouts and shifting more and more of the costs onto the backs of workers. The employment-based system of health coverage puts benefits at risk, every time workers face lay-offs, change jobs, or heaven forbid, go on strike. More and more friends, neighbors and family members have no health coverage at all as the number of uninsured Americans climbs past 47 million. A just health care system would provide cradle-to-grave coverage for all Americans through a public insurance fund and a private health care system with free choice of doctors, hospitals, and clinics. We should join with our sisters and brothers across the country, to advocate, educate and organize around the following principles. Access

to comprehensive health care is a human right. It is the responsibility of society, through its government, to assure this right. Coverage should not be tied to employment. Private insurance firms past record disqualifies them from a central role in managing health care. The right to choose and change one's physician is fundamental to patient autonomy. Patients should be free to seek care from any licensed health care provider. In a democracy, the public should set overall health policies. Personal medical decisions must be made by patients with their caregivers, not by corporate or government bureaucrats.

As summer is fast approaching, I would like to take this opportunity to wish well to all Union Brothers and Sisters and their families. I hope you have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Until Next Time.



by Michael A.  
Long,  
Editor

## Editor's Report

# The Long And Short Of It

ments have been made with another hotel in the city, not far from the conference.

### DEADLINE FOR THE MICHIGAN MESSENGER

As you may have noticed, the deadline for articles is no longer placed in the Michigan Messenger. I have been asked to the reason, and I have to admit, in the beginning it was just an oversight on my part (with the change to a new printer, format, etc). However, to rectify this, I will make every effort in the future to place the deadline in my article. But . . . in the meantime, please take a moment and cut this out, and place by your computer, desk, or wherever you write or type or be inspired to create your next article:

January/February Edition.....	Jan 15th
March/April Edition.....	March 15th
May/June Edition.....	May 15th
July/August Edition.....	July 15th
September/October Edition....	Sept. 15th
Nov./Dec. Edition. . . . .	Nov. 15th

You can either send me your article to my mailbox (PO Box 280; Sheridan, MI 48884); or you can e-Mail it (**Editor@mpwu.com**). The choice is yours!

### WELCOME

I wanted to take this opportunity to welcome two new members to the Michigan Postal Workers Union Executive Board. Robin Ely as the new Area 3 Director (representing those members-at-large in the 480/483 Zip Code areas); and to Therese Cowan, as the new Area 8 Director (representing those members-at-large in the 492 Zip Code area).

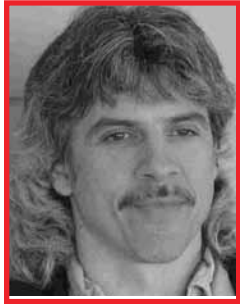
In closing, I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Educational Convention. If you are unable to make this, please make every effort to attend upcoming District Meetings. These, normally two-day, training events are scheduled around the state, to ensure that all locals and members (especially, Members at Large) who wish to be trained and know the contract, the ability to do so.

Lastly, in keeping with my above statement: Articles for the next edition of the Michigan Messenger (July-August 2009 Edition) are due to me not later than July 15th.

Yours in Solidarity.



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by Richard Blake, Clerk Craft Director

## Clerk Craft's Report

# Arbitration Win

**Arbitration win in reversion case** - on April 7, an arbitration hearing was scheduled in Ann Arbor concerning the reversion of a vacant full-time Clerk position. The grievance was filed way back in early 2003, and it concerned a reversion where there were no obvious procedural errors by management (the reversion was timely, the Union's "input" was requested, etc.), so this was not going to be an easy case by any means. National Business Agent Linda Turney did a marvelous job presenting the case, focusing on the similar cases cited by the Union, and the grievance was sustained, with a full make-whole remedy. The post office seems intent upon eliminating every last Clerk job in existence, so for the Union to prevail in a difficult case like this was a significant accomplishment. **GREAT JOB LINDA!!!**

**Here we go again** - we all have seen how bad things have become over the past few months, as management eliminates jobs by the thousands, violates the contract with reckless abandon, and is threatening to excess Clerks outside of their craft, to offices as far away as 400 miles. Unfortunately, this seems to have led to an epidemic of our members blaming the Union for all of this, rather than blaming postal management. We've talked about this before, but unfortunately it bears repeating:

- The Union doesn't abolish jobs, and the Union doesn't "let" management abolish jobs. The contract, which was approved by a democratic vote, gives management the specific right to abolish jobs. The Union can't wave a magic wand and make that contract language disappear.
- The Union doesn't excess employees, and the Union doesn't "let" management excess employees. The contract gives management

the right to excess employees; the Union can't make that contract language disappear either.

- The Union doesn't issue unwarranted discipline, and the Union doesn't "let" management issue unwarranted discipline. The contract clearly gives management the right to discipline employees.

On the other hand:

- The Union **does** fight management's elimination of jobs,
- The Union **does** challenge unjustified excessing, and
- The Union **does** fight against unwarranted discipline.

In tough times like these, it seems as if people tend to get a little "confused" about these issues.

**Is our layoff protection really all that great?** - I may be in the minority on this issue, but with the unprecedented situation we're seeing right now I'm not so sure that the language in Article 6 protecting almost all APWU-represented employees from layoffs is such a good thing. Article 6 states that layoffs would be implemented "in lieu of reassigning employees under the provisions of Article 12". What if the post office actually did propose layoffs rather than excessing? Let's look at this question in detail . . .

In Ann Arbor, for example, management is still threatening to excess the 4 junior Clerks. They've made it clear that they plan on excessing them into the Letter Carrier craft if possible, and the affected employees are extremely apprehensive about this. After all, if it happens, they'll have to begin a new period of seniority, and as the junior Carriers, you can bet that they're the ones who'll be doing street assistance on walking routes in below-zero weather - that is, if they're "lucky" enough to pass driving training (the post office has already made it clear that any excessed Clerk who fails driving training as a Carrier will be removed). So, does being excessed into the Letter Carrier

craft (in an office that could be as far away as 400 miles) sound all that great?

On the other hand, if management announced their intention to lay off the 4 junior Clerks, what would actually happen? Article 6.B.4 states, in part: ". . . the employer shall solicit volunteers from among employees in the same Craft within the installation to terminate their employment with the employer. Employees who elect to terminate their employment shall receive a lump sum severance payment in the amount provided by Part 435 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual, will receive benefit coverage to the extent provided by such Manual, and, if eligible, will be given the early retirement benefits . . .". The "lump sum severance payment" referred to above would be roughly 30 weeks' pay for an employee with 20 years of seniority (50 weeks' pay for an employee with 30 years, etc.). Gee, do you think that maybe 4 of us old-timers might be willing to take our 30 grand (or more) and beat feet out the door? I think they'd have to hold a lottery to see **which** four get to take the severance package and leave!

Let's compare the 2 scenarios, then, shall we? With "layoff protection", four of my co-workers are at risk for having to start over in another city (or state for that matter) as Letter Carriers, and four of us old-timers who'd love to retire but can't afford to be stuck working at the post office as conditions continue to deteriorate. On the other hand, **without** "layoff protection" these same four workers will surely be able to remain in their jobs, and four of us miserable old-timers will be able to escape with between \$30,000 and \$50,000. I realize that I'm oversimplifying just a little, but this **is** what the contract says, and I can't help but wonder if maybe we'd all be better off **without** "layoff protection".

Until next time,  
Yours in Solidarity.

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	

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

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

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

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







by John Smeekens, Veterans Director

## Veteran's Report

# Never Again

By the time you read this month's article, the NEVER AGAIN campaign will have already started. On May 11, 2009, I personally sent letters and bumper stickers to all 110 Representatives and 38 Senators of the State of Michigan. The NEVER AGAIN campaign is all about 93 year old Marvin E. Schur, a Purple Heart recipient and World War II Veteran, who froze to death in his home in Bay City Michigan, in January of 2009, for failure to pay his utility bill. It was reported that the local utility company had placed an electricity limiting device on Mr. Schur's home in a dispute over unpaid utility bills. The device limits the power that reaches a home, and it blows out like a fuse if power consumption rises past a set level. Therefore, he had NO HEAT and froze to death. Neighbors found Mr. Schur on the bedroom floor, wrapped in several layers of clothing. A medical examiner found evidence of frostbite, and stated that Mr. Schur died a painful death due to hypothermia. Mr. Schur did indeed owe more than \$1000.00 in unpaid electric bills, but when the house was entered, neighbors found more than \$1000.00 in cash, clipped to the utility bill, sitting on his kitchen table. When the story broke, John Deppen, a gentleman from central Pennsylvania, started the bumper sticker campaign. When I read the article in the local Free Press, I contacted Mr. Deppen for more information, and got his okay to press the issue and campaign here in Michigan. My letters to our Representative and Senators basically said as follows:

"May 11, 2009. Dear Representative/Senator, My name is John P. Smeekens and I am a 100% disabled Vietnam Veteran. I am not one of your constituents, but I ask for your support. I am a constituent within (named my areas Rep./Senator) district. I ask that you and your fellow Representatives/Senators address some type of legislation that will address the terrible tragedy that befell Marvin E. Schur, a Decorated World War II Veteran from Bay City Michigan. I am not asking to place or find someone to blame for this tragedy, but only to address that "NEVER AGAIN", can we allow a tragedy of this magnitude to repeat itself. I have enclosed several articles in regards to this unfortunate incident, along with a bumper sticker that coincides with this letter writing campaign. Your support would be greatly appreciated."

So this is where I need your help. I need you to spread the word about this unfortunate incident. I need you to contact your local Representative and Senator and ask them if they will address or support some type of legislation to make sure that NEVER AGAIN can we allow a tragedy like this to happen. And it's not meant to address just Veterans', what about the elderly? It could happen to someone you know. I am presently looking into order-

ing more bumper stickers so they will be available to any of those of you who are interested in getting one. I DO NOT wish to profit from this encounter, but only spread the word. If I do get additional ones, they will be for sale at whatever the cost to make them, plus shipping and handling by the source. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

### PURPLE HEART STAMP

Stamp prices just went up, and they had already planned ahead, and brought out the .44 cent Purple Heart Stamp on Monday April 27, 2009. Way to go P. O.

### FILIPINO CLAIMS

Pass the word that the United States Government will start deciding on claims for compensation filed by Filipino World War II Veterans' late this spring. After the recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 23,000 Filipino Veterans' of World War II had filed claims. More information on the Filipino claims under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 may be found at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1654>.

### HELP V.S.O.'s

On May 5, 2009 Governor Granholm signed an Executive Order 2009-22 that reduces and eliminates funding to all Veteran Service Organizations in Michigan, that receive State of Michigan Grant funding to assist veterans and their families. This Order is intended to balance the State of Michigan Budget but affects many other veteran related items. It is required in Article V, Section 20 of the State Constitution that our Michigan House and Senate approve this order. It is imperative we all contact our legislators and request they overturn this order by voting NO. It reduces funding for this year (next 3 months) by 25% and after June of this year all future funding that supports all Service Officers in all Veteran organizations is eliminated. This must be stopped. We need your help - notify your reps immediately and ask them to oppose this. If you wish to view the Executive Order, go to <http://www.michigan.gov> and select executive order.

### WELCOME HOME

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched its new "Returning Veterans" Web site - [www.oefoif.va.gov](http://www.oefoif.va.gov) - to welcome home Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social, Veteran-centric Web site focusing on their needs and questions. The Web site will feature videos, Veteran stories, and a blog where Veterans are encouraged to post feedback. The site also will restructure the traditional index-of-benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized, and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow Veterans to

find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore.

### POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (P.T.S.D.)

The House Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing on VFW-supported legislation that would revise the claims process for PTSD diagnosis. H.R. 952, *The Combat PTSD Act*, would clarify and expand the definition of "combat with the enemy," to include a theater of combat operations during a period of war, or in combat against a hostile force during a period of

hostilities. The subcommittee members reviewed the original intent of the law and found VA is placing an unnecessary burden on veterans diagnosed with PTSD and other conditions to prove their combat stressors. If passed, the bill would ease the claims process for veterans who served in non-combat roles in war zones - but who are suffering from post traumatic stress disorder - to receive benefits and treatment from VA. For more on the hearing and the testimony of witnesses, visit the House VA website at: <http://veterans.house.gov/>.

Until next time.

## 2009 Michigan Postal Workers Union Educational Convention

When: June 11 - 13, 2009

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

### Hotel Accommodations (Overflow):

Fairfield by Marriott  
4105 East Wilder Road  
Bay City, MI 48706  
Tel: (989) 667-7050

Costs: Registration: \$75.00

### Class Itinerary:

#### Thursday- June 11, 2009

1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

General Session - Cliff Guffey  
Arbitration (Limited to the first 25 people)  
Clerk Craft Q&A  
Maintenance Craft Q&A  
Motor Vehicle Craft Q&A

#### Friday - June 12, 2009

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Arbitration (cont.)  
Maintenance  
Article 12  
OWCP  
Postal Press  
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.  
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Arbitration (cont.)  
Maintenance  
Article 12  
OWCP  
Michigan Office of Service to Seniors  
Children's Auxiliary Workshop

6:00 p.m.  
7:00 p.m.

Reception (Cash Bar)  
Dinner & Speakers

#### Saturday - June 13, 2009

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Arbitration (cont.)  
Maintenance Q&A  
Retirement  
Function 4  
Beginner / Advanced Stewards  
Children's Auxiliary Workshop

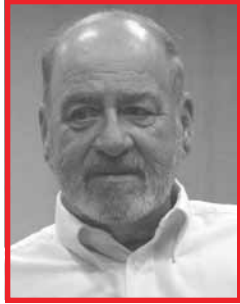
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
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Arbitration (cont.)  
Function 4  
MVS - Article 39  
Clerk Q&A  
Beginner / Advanced Stewards  
Retirement Benefits & Info  
Children's Auxiliary Workshop





## Retiree's Report



by Al  
LaBrecque,  
Retiree's Chapter  
President

# S.O.A.R. Coalition Of Michigan

**S.O.A.R. Coalition of Michigan.** S.O.A.R. is an acronym for Save Our Annuity Retirement. In 1976, Detroit APWU President Doug Holbrook, and NALC Branch #1 President, Lou Smiertka, got together and formed one of the first S.O.A.R. Chapters in the country. This was at a time when the U.S. Government was running short of money to keep the Social Security Administration afloat. So they decided to do away with the annuity run by the Civil Service Commission and put the Postal and Government employees under Social Security in order to put more money into the coffers.

This was the beginning of the S.O.A.R. Congressional Breakfasts, which have been held annually in Livonia. The aim, then and now, was to get the people out and to show our Michigan Delegation of U.S. Senators and Representatives how angry we were after all these years of paying a much higher rate of money into the Civil Service Annuity, and now to be told we would only receive only a Social Security retirement. In the private sector, the public was paying about 2% of their earnings while Postal and Federal employees were paying about 6% of their earnings. (Source: S.O.A.R. Coalition of Michigan). That particular attack on CSRS annuities was thwarted, but as we know, under the Reagan Administration in '83, Congress in all its wisdom, or lack thereof, jammed FERS down our throats thus creating a dual retirement system for postal and federal employees hired after on or after January 1, 1984.

Since 1976 we have seen several attacks on both CSRS and FERS. The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) reduced Social Security benefits for eligible CSRS retirees, and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), which shortchanges the surviving spouse of such eligible annuitants. FERS retirees are not given credit for unused sick leave upon retirement. And, both CSRS and FERS retirees Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) health insurance premiums are deducted from after tax annuity earnings, while active employees have been able to deduct their health insurance premiums from pre-taxed earnings since 2000. Each of these issues are currently in bills introduced in the 111th Congress to correct these glaring inequities.

As I've indicated in this column time, after time; **legislation is where we must focus our attention!** Because I feel so strongly that's "where it's at" for APWU Locals, Retiree Chapters, and every one of our members, I decided to make the effort to attend this year's 28th Annual S.O.A.R. Congressional Breakfast to represent the legislative interests of our retiree membership on April 19th in Livonia. Over the years I had attended these breakfasts, but due to distance, it has been a while. I had high expectations that we

would be emphasizing legislation directly affecting CSRS and FERS annuitants, as that's what I'm given to understand that's what S.O.A.R. is all about. Besides, I always look forward to an opportunity to be with "my kind of people" again.

At this year's breakfast, there were perhaps a little over 300 people in attendance, a mix of National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), APWU and NALC, largely from the S.E. area of the state. The MPWU State Retiree Chapter had a table reserved. State Chapter Trustee, Patricia Miller, Flint Chapter V.P., Sue Dick, and Detroit Dist. Area Local Retiree Chapter President, Al Fouche were there, and as a bonus; APWU Retirees' Dept. Dir., Judy Beard, who was among the featured speakers. The event was chaired by Clyde Moore of NARFE.

Director Beard gave an excellent presentation on our paramount retiree legislation; **H.R. 235** and **S.484** repeal of WEP/GPO, and **S.491** and **H.R. 1203** "Premium Conversion", as did NALC Retiree Dir., Ernie Kirkland. Legislation permitting FERS retirees credit for unused sick leave was also pressed by Beard and Kirkland. Most of the other speakers emphasized H.R. 22 which would relieve the USPS from the prefunding of retiree health benefits to the tune of about \$5.4 billion per year over 10 years, and the Employee Free Choice Act, both issues being hot-button legislative goals, but not necessarily retiree issues per se. Rep. John Conyers bill H.R. 676, the single payer health care plan, also got a lot of attention, as he was only one of three (3) Members of Congress physically in attendance. The others were; U.S. Representatives Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Gary Peters. Rep. John Dingell was represented by his wife; Debbie Dingell, Senators Stabenow and Levin by staff members, as were several other Michigan Congresspersons by their staffers, all from the S.E. quadrant of the state.

I had hoped for far more emphasis on repeal of WEP/GPO and the Federal and Military Health Care Act (Premium Conversion). There was a general consensus that had this been an election year, our Michigan Congressional Delegation's physical presence may have been more prominent, and just maybe from other areas of the state. However, when I posed this observation to S.O.A.R. Chairman Moore, he advised me that; ". . . This year's attendance by our elected officials was better than last year . . .", (an election year) which not only is disappointing, but reinforces my contention that it is absolutely imperative we concentrate our letter-writing and contact efforts with all our Senators and Members of Congress on our paramount retiree legislation. Director Judy Beard has alluded to the possibility of an APWU Retirees' Dept. legislative rally on The Hill sometime in early 2010. That may well be some of

the best money our Retiree Chapters can spend in representing our retiree members' best interests.

**Education Convention**, June 11-13 in Bay City, will feature three retiree related classes (probably as you read this). On Friday, June 12th, 1:30-5:00 p.m. there will be a presentation by Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, Region 7 Dir. Drew Orvosh and Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program Mgr., Kristi Bueche, giving an overview of services available in the 16 regions in the state as resources for seniors. On Saturday, June 13th, the morning session will be a CSRS/FERS retirement power point program conducted by APWU retirement advocate, Joe Gordon. The Saturday afternoon session will be a State Retiree Chapter open forum featuring a presentation by the Lansing based nonprofit Legal Ho-

line for Michigan Seniors (Elder Law of Michigan, Inc.) on wills, trusts and estate planning. These classes are **open to ALL active and retired delegates**. APWU Retirees' Dir., Judy Beard will be addressing this session as well, with ample opportunity for Q. & A. There are plenty of internal issues to address. The State Chapter will also be holding our annual Executive Board meeting to conduct Chapter business and to consider sending delegates to the APWU Retirees' Dept. Conference & Workshops being held in Las Vegas in conjunction with the APWU All-Craft Conferences, Sept. 30-Oct.2.

I'm looking forward to once again being with my retired and active Sisters and Brothers in Bay City and from what I have been told, we are expecting a very good turnout of attendees.

Be Strong!

## Go Figure Buy American

submitted by Janeil Payne, Vice President,  
Salem Oregon Area Local #604

I already do this and have for a while. I support the idea totally.

In our current economic situation, every little thing we buy or do affects someone else and perhaps even his or her job. So, after reading this email, I think this lady is on the right track. Let's get behind her!!!

"My grandson likes Hershey's candy. It is marked made in Mexico now. So I do not buy it any more. My favorite toothpaste Colgate is made in Mexico now. I have switched to Crest. You have to read the labels on everything.

This past weekend I was at Kroger. I needed 60W light bulbs and Bounce dryer sheets. I was in the light bulb aisle and right next to the GE brand I normally buy was an off brand labeled, "Everyday Value." I picked up both types of bulbs and compared the stats - they were the same except for the price. The GE bulbs were more money than the Everyday Value brand but the thing that surprised me the most was the fact that GE was made in MEXICO and the Everyday Value brand was made in - get ready for this - the USA in a company in Cleveland, Ohio.

So throw out the myth that you cannot find products you use every day that are made right here.

So on to another aisle - Bounce Dryer Sheets . . . yep, you guessed it, Bounce cost more money and is made in Canada. The Everyday Value brand was less money and MADE IN THE USA! I did laundry yesterday and the dryer sheets performed just like the Bounce Free I have been using for years and at almost half the price!

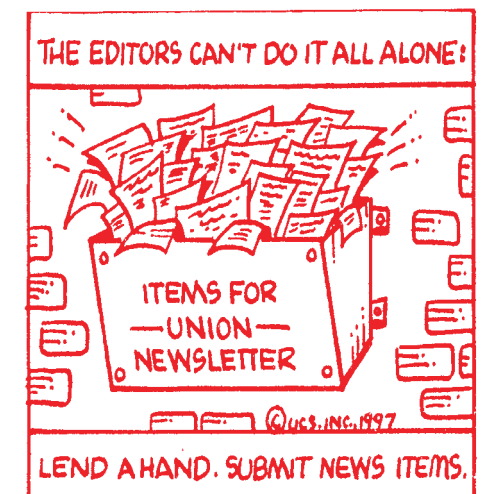
So my challenge to you is to start read-

ing the labels when you shop for everyday things and see what you can find that is made in the USA - the job you save may be your own or your neighbors!

If you accept the challenge, pass this on to others in your address book so we can all start buying American, one light bulb at a time! Stop buying from China and Mexico . . . (We should have awakened a decade ago . . .)

Let's get with the program . . . help our fellow Americans keep their jobs and create more jobs here in the U.S.A.

*Editor's NOTE: At the recent Michigan Labor Press conference I attended, the Union Label coalition was there. During lunch, they made a presentation. One thing from this presentation stuck with me more than the others. Maybe it was because I didn't even know this . . . but if you try hard enough, you can find at least one thing that was made in America . . . but you have to look for it. By law, manufactures are required to state/place where an item was made/produced. It is up to the consumer to find it and make an educated decision on what to buy.*





# Retirement Planning Payback Time

by Tammy Flanagan,  
National Institute of  
Transition Planning

It's the end of a short week for most federal employees that began with Memorial Day, on which we remember our fallen soldiers. Some of you no doubt raised the American flag in front of your house, or tended to the grave of a family member who died in service to our country. I took part in the annual Ride to the Wall, also known as Rolling Thunder. The ride has taken place for the last 22 years in Washington, with a goal of bringing awareness to prisoners of war and those missing in action, and to help American veterans.

I'm not usually a motorcycle mama, but a small contingent from Western Pennsylvania that includes my sister-in-law have been coming for the past nine years, and our family provides a place to stay and a guided escort in and out of Washington in exchange for a ride on the back seat of a Harley.

In honor of our veterans this week, I thought I'd go back to my 2006 column on military service payback -- the payments employees make into their retirement funds to get credit for previous military service. The column attracted more than 60 comments -- a sure indication of both interest in the issue and confusion about it.

Here are answers to some of the questions posted to that column.

**Q - I was discharged from the Air Force in 1975. I started civil service in 1985 under the Federal Employees Retirement System. I now have 27 years of service, including my four years in the Air Force. Do I have to pay back my military time?**

A - If you want to use your military service toward eligibility and computation of your FERS basic retirement benefit, then yes, you have to pay a deposit. This will give you four years of additional service toward meeting the requirement to be eligible to retire under FERS. It also will provide 1 percent (or 1.1 percent if you retire at 62 or later with at least 20 years of total federal service) of your high-three average salary for each year of active duty toward your basic retirement benefit. Your deposit will equal 3 percent of your basic pay while you served on active duty, plus interest that began to accrue on your second anniversary of federal service.

**Q - I retired from the Air Force in 1998 after 22 years. I entered the reserves and now am an Air Reserve technician. I was told if I buy back my military time and add the years to my civil service time that I would lose my retirement pay. Is there a regulation pertaining to this issue?**

A - You have two different issues. You retired from the Air Force in 1988 and are receiving retired pay. In addition, you are working as an Air Reserve technician, which is treated as civilian federal service. If you want to combine your 22 years of active service with your civilian service to get a FERS basic retirement benefit, then you have to waive your retirement pay

and pay a military service deposit. This would only make sense if your military retirement pay is significantly less than the value of 22 years of service in your FERS retirement.

I suggest you request two retirement estimates from your human resources office. The first one should be based only on your civilian service. The second should include all your service, both civilian and military. If the second estimate is significantly higher than the first after adding the amount of the estimate to your military retirement, then you might consider combining your two careers. If this looks like the best choice, you also should keep in mind that there are differences in the survivor benefits and cost-of-living adjustments between the FERS retirement and the military benefit. The waiver of your military retirement is permanent, but doesn't occur until your FERS retirement begins. You would not lose any other veterans benefits such as TRICARE or commissary privileges.

Regarding your work as an Air Reserve technician, this is credited as civilian service under FERS (and the Civil Service Retirement System). See **Chapter 20 of the CSRS and FERS Handbook** for more information.

**Q - For CSRS military payback, is there a cap for Vietnam vets on the amount you have to pay back? A co-worker told me he thought it was \$2,000 max, no matter how much you owe. Is this true?**

A - This falls into the urban myth category. There is not a cap on the amount of military deposit. It is what it is, but it is usually one of the best returns on investment you can find, since you pay the deposit on your base pay while you served in the military and receive the credit toward your retirement at your high-three average salary.

**Q - It is unfair to an officer versus an enlisted person with the military payback system. To get the same number of years of military service credit costs more because of the higher pay of an officer. Additionally, the officer paid for a four-year and sometimes an additional two to three year degree while not receiving credit in retirement for those years in school.**

A - Whoa! You pay the deposit based on your military base pay. This is the one time it pays to be enlisted. At other times, there were benefits to having status as an officer. Also, if you received your college degree at one of the service academies, then you would receive credit for your active duty while at the academy.

**Q - I retired from the Navy with 20 years' service. I will be starting a civil service job with the Defense Department and am looking into what the military payback option is for retirement and annual leave. Would I lose my military pension while still working, or do I just lose it when I retire? What do I need to do to find out my options?**

A - You do not need to waive your military retirement to become a civilian federal employee. If you decide to include

your military service with your civilian service when you retire, then you would have to make the decision to waive your retired pay. Here's some information from the Office of Personnel Management on these issues: **Veterans Employment Information and Service Credit for Leave Rate Accrual and Retirement.**

**Q - I was discharged (after four years) from the active-duty Air Force in 1956. I began my Federal Aviation Administration career in April 1997. My service computation date for annual leave is April 1993. Does this date count toward my federal retirement?**

A - Military active duty performed prior to 1957 is creditable toward CSRS and FERS retirement without a military service deposit. This is because military service performed prior to 1957 was not covered by Social Security tax withholding. As long as your military service is documented in your official personnel folder it will be creditable for both leave accrual and retirement purposes.

**Q - My husband served for three and a half years in the military between 1965 and 1968. According to the Social Security updates he receives, he has only 32 Social Security credits. He is currently 63 years old. You say he doesn't have to pay the deposit for military service because he will retire after 62 and doesn't qualify for Social Security. But what happens if he works after he retires and eventually earns 40 or more Social Security credits? Will his pension still remain constant, or does he then lose military**

**years from his pension?**

A - If your husband is covered under CSRS and was hired prior to Oct. 1, 1982, then he does not need to pay his military service deposit. Additional information is available in **Chapter 22 of the CSRS and FERS Handbook.**

**Q - I have been buying back my post-1956 military time since 2005 for \$150 per month and will retire under CSRS sometime in the near future. Will I be able to claim a tax deduction for the interest I am paying? If so, how will it be done?**

A - After you retire, OPM will provide you with an accounting of all your contributions that you've made to the retirement fund, including your military deposit and interest you paid. You will not have to pay taxes on this part of your retirement, since all these contributions already have been subject to tax. Here's an **IRS publication** that explains these rules.

If you have other questions, you might find the answers in some of the other columns I've written about military service credit deposits. They are located on our website at: <http://www.nitpinc.com>.

Tammy Flanagan is the senior benefits director for the **National Institute of Transition Planning Inc.**, which conducts federal retirement planning workshops and seminars. She has spent 25 years helping federal employees take charge of their retirement by understanding their benefits. *Editor's NOTE: Thank you for allowing me to use your column in the Michigan Messenger.*

## Clip this out and keep it with you while working. Have it ready, "Just in case"

### Statement

I request the presence of my APWU representative. If I am a suspect in a criminal matter, please so advise me. If so, I wish to contact my attorney.

His/Her name is \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

If I am under arrest, I request you to do so advise me and to inform me of the reason or reasons.

I do not consent to a search of my person or property. If you have a search warrant, I request to see it at this time.

I do not waive any of my rights, including my right to remain silent. I will not sign a waiver-of-rights form, nor admit or deny any allegation, nor make any written or oral statement unless my attorney is personally present and so advises me.



### Rights Before Postal Inspectors

If questioned by a U.S. Postal inspector, even if you believe you are not guilty of any wrong doing, it is suggested that you:

- Remain calm;
- Correctly identify yourself;
- Do not physically resist an arrest or a search of your person or property;
- Read aloud to the Postal Inspector(s) the statement on the reverse side of this card;
- Remain silent until you have consulted with your APWU representative or attorney, as appropriate.

This is not complete legal advice. Always consult with a lawyer.





# Various News And Information

## TSP Rates on the Rise (Editor's NOTE: It is about time!)

As of May 29, 2009, rates from the TSP have been released, these are Year to Date: G Fund, up 1.09%; F Fund, up 1.4%; C Fund, up 3.05%, S Fund, up 7.07%, I Fund, up 7.77%; L-2040, up 5.05%; L-2030, up 4.72%; L-2020, up 4.25%; L-2010, up 2.58%, and lastly, L-Income, up 2.34%

## CAMP LEJEUNE DRINKING WATER REGISTRY

Did you live or work at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in 1987 or before? If so, please register with the Marine Corps by visiting [www.marines.mil/clsurvey](http://www.marines.mil/clsurvey) or by calling the Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water Call Center at 877-261-9782, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

In the early 1980's, two solvents, trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE), both unregulated at the time, were found in two water systems serving the Tarawa Terrace and Hadnot Point areas. Certain drinking water wells were identified as the source of the chemicals and were taken out of service in 1984 and 1985.

The Department of the Navy is funding two independent research initiatives. The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is determining if there is an association between exposure to the water and certain adverse health effects. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is evaluating specific health risks associated with exposure.

Upon completion of the research, the Marine Corps will directly notify those on the registry through direct mail and email.

## MAJOR ACADEMIC STUDY FINDS NO UNION INTIMIDATION

## FROM MAJORITY SIGN-UP Study analyzed public sector in four states over six year period

Majority sign up does not cause union or employer intimidation, according to a new report released by departments at University of Illinois, Rutgers University, Cornell University, and University of Oregon. Participants analyzed data from public sector workers in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Oregon for six years and found that out of more than 34,000 people who joined unions through majority sign up, a process sometimes referred to as "card check," there was not "a hint" of union or employer intimidation.

The report states: In brief, from 2003-2009, a total of 34,148 public sector workers employed in state, county, municipal and educational institutions voluntarily joined a union. Most importantly, contrary to business claims, in 1,073 cases

of union certification and in at least 1,359 majority-authorization campaigns, there was not a single confirmed incidence of union misconduct.

"Today's report proves, once again, that corporations are leveling baseless allegations in a desperate attempt to prevent workers who want a union from forming one," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "Unions are the single best ticket in our nation to the middle class for working men and women. The Employee Free Choice Act returns to workers the freedom to form and join a union to improve their lives."

According to the findings, the lack of intimidation on either side also shows that when there is a clear path to forming a union, the workplace as a whole functions more smoothly with no friction.

The report concludes: As is true in so many other policy areas, on the subject of union representation the states are incubators for new ideas and practices. New York, New Jersey, Illinois and Oregon have demonstrated that a majority-authorization petition can genuinely determine the will of the employees to be unionized and provides a functional, largely non-adversarial and event-less process for insuring a fair work environment for everyone.

According to the report, the states' laws are very similar to the proposed Employee Free Choice Act majority sign up provision. The report was commissioned by the United Association for Labor Education.

## BILL WOULD EXTEND FEDERAL BENEFITS TO DOMESTIC PARTNERS

A bipartisan measure introduced May 20 would—if signed into law—give same-sex domestic partners of federal employees the same benefits as the spouses of federal employees. Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Reps. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., sponsored the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act of 2009, identical to legislation introduced in the last Congress by Lieberman. Under the legislation, same-sex domestic partners of federal employees living together in a committed relationship would be eligible for health benefits, long-term care, federal retirement benefits, family and medical leave, and other benefits. The domestic partners of federal employees also would be subject to the same responsibilities that apply to the spouses of federal employees, such as anti-nepotism rules and financial disclosure requirements, the sponsors said. According to the Williams Institute at the University of California-Los Angeles, more than 30,000 federal workers live in committed relationships with same-sex domestic partners who are not federal employees. "As a majority of Fortune 500 companies have already demonstrated, equality and diversity in the workplace boost productivity and help attract and keep the most qualified employees." To see more, go to: <http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?>

# The Fight Never Ends . . .

# Please Contribute To COPA

## To Contribute to COPA via Electronic Fund Transfer

Please fill out this form and mail with a voided check or a copy of a check to: APWU COPA • PO Box 630759 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0759

The COPA fund will automatically deduct the amount you choose to contribute, with no fee to you. I hereby authorize my bank to deduct from my checking account the sum of:

- \$1  \$2  \$4  \$6  \$10  \$\_\_\_\_\_

per pay period and forward that amount to the American Postal Workers Union, Committee on Political Action (COPA).

I make this authorization voluntarily and may revoke it at any time by notifying the APWU COPA Committee in writing.

If you are currently contributing to COPA through EFT and want to change the amount of your deduction, please check this box:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security # or Employee ID #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Local: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out this form and mail with a voided check or a copy of a check to: APWU COPA • PO Box 630759 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0759



This COPA solicitation is paid for by the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, 1300 L St., N.W., Washington, D.C. (202) 842-4200; it is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. Contributions or gifts to COPA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. COPA will use the contributions it receives for political purposes, including making contributions to candidates for federal, state and local offices, and addressing political issues of public importance. Contributions to COPA are voluntary. More or less than the suggested amount may be given, and the amount given or the refusal to give will not benefit or disadvantage the person being solicited. Federal law requires political action committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

## To Contribute to COPA by Check or Credit Card

Please fill out this form and mail to: APWU COPA • PO Box 630759 • Baltimore, MD 21263-0759

- My check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. (Please make your check payable to APWU COPA.)
- I would like my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ charged to my: (Check one)  MasterCard  Visa  American Express  Discover Card (Check one)  Monthly  Quarterly  One-time Only

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
*I authorize COPA to charge my contribution to my credit card.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security # or Employee ID #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Local: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_



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# New APWU FMLA Forms Available

The APWU's FMLA forms have been updated to meet revised certification requirements that took effect Jan. 16, 2009. The forms have also been renumbered. APWU Form 1 is for leave for an employee's own serious health condition and APWU Form 2 is for leave to care for a family member's serious health condition. APWU Forms 3 and 4 are new and are for employees who are requesting military family leave under the new regulations.

Please note that the FMLA does not require the use of any specific form, as long as the necessary information is provided. The APWU's revised forms are the recommended forms for APWU members to use when requesting Family and Medical Leave.

Although the law does not require that medical certification be provided in any specific format, the new FMLA regulations do require additional information on the certification form. The new APWU FMLA forms now include spaces for 1) the Health Care Provider's (HCP) telephone number, fax number, and type of medical practice/specialty; and 2) if the employee is requesting intermittent or reduced-schedule leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition, a brief statement explaining why such care is necessary.

### CHANGES

Included among the changes to the FMLA regulations are: a narrowing of the definition of "serious health condition;" requirements for additional medical documentation; requirements that medical documentation be provided more frequently, and permission for employers to contact an employee's healthcare provider directly, without the employees' knowledge or permission. The new rules also shorten the amount of time that employees have to provide notice of leave, while giving employers more time to provide notice of eligibility and more time to designate the leave as FMLA.

On the positive side, the new regulations provide special leave rights for military families. The rule allows employees in military families to take leave to care for ill or injured service members and to take leave to help manage the affairs of service members who are away on active duty. A summary of the changes can be found at <http://www.apwu.org/issues-fmla/analysis.htm>.

### DOL FORMS

The notice the Postal Service sent the APWU dated January 13, 2009, included changes to the DOL forms, plus a copy of an employee service talk. Please note that, although neither party can dictate how they draft instructions or directives to the field, the employee service talk was subsequently revised at the APWU's suggestion.

The new DOL forms are as follows:

- A new WH-380-E, "Certification of Health Care Provider for Employee's Serious Health Condition," and WH-380-F, "Certification of Health Care Provider for Family Member's Serious Health Condition," which replace the old WH-380, "Certification of Health Care Provider";
- A new WH-381 that will replace USPS Publication 71, "Notice for Employees requesting Leave for Conditions Covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act," to provide written notification detailing the employer's specific expectations and obligations of an employee taking FMLA protected leave;

- A new WH-382, "Designation Notice," to meet the employer's obligation to designate leave as FMLA-protected and inform the employee of the amount of leave that will be counted against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. The WH-382 form is also used to inform employees of any additional information that may be needed, and/or whether a second or third opinion is being requested by the Postal Service.

diagnosis to be included on the form. If an employee decides not to use the APWU's forms and instead chooses to use one of the "optional" WH-380 forms, they should tell their healthcare provider to only state the basic "medical facts" concerning the general nature of their condition, not their medical diagnosis or prognosis.

### APWU'S FMLA MEDICAL CERTIFICATION FORMS

The APWU has updated our FMLA forms and created two new FMLA forms for employees in military families. Please note that the APWU forms have also been renumbered. APWU Form #1 is for leave for an employee's own serious health condition and APWU Form #2 is for leave to care for a family member's serious health condition. APWU Forms #3 and #4 are for employees who are requesting military family leave under the new regulations. APWU Form #3 is for certification of a qualifying exigency and APWU Form #4 is for military caregiver leave.

### INCOMPLETE OR INSUFFICIENT MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

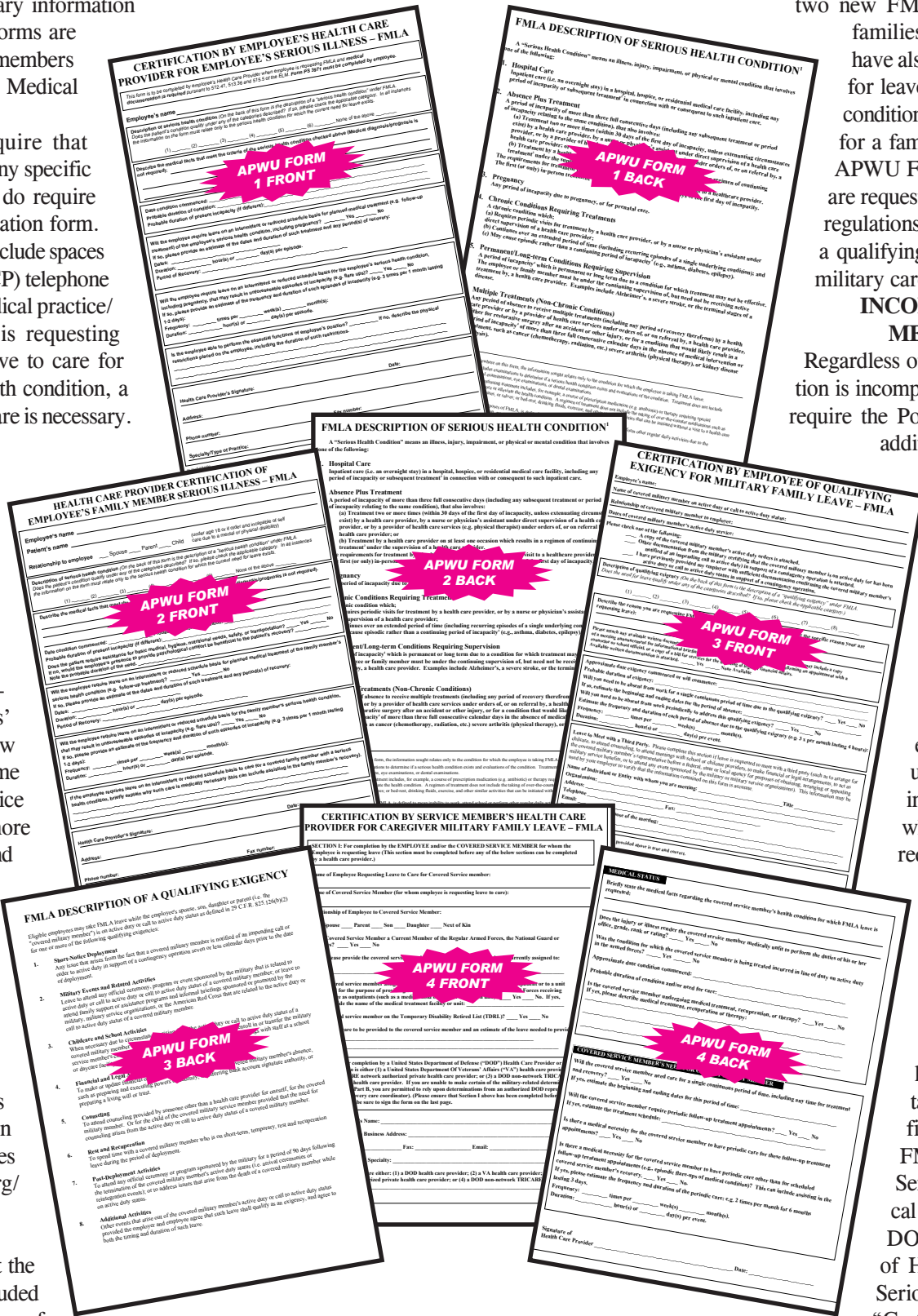
Regardless of which forms are used, if the certification is incomplete or insufficient, the new regulations require the Postal Service to state, in writing, what additional information is necessary to make the certification complete and sufficient, and to give employees the opportunity to submit the additional information. The Postal Service will be using DOL Form WH-382, "Designation Notice", in order to meet its obligation to designate leave as FMLA-protected and inform the employee of the amount of leave that will be counted against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. The WH-382 form is also used to inform employees what additional information may be needed, if any, and/or whether a second or third opinion is being requested by the Postal Service.

We have also been informed that when additional information is required, the Postal Service will make a copy of the medical certification that was submitted, then return it to the employee for the additional information.

Despite the fact that an employee may have submitted their medical documentation using an APWU Medical Certification Form, or any other format for FML medical documentation, the Postal Service will return the employee's medical certification, along with the "optional" DOL forms WH-380-E, "Certification of Health Care Provider For Employee's Serious Health Condition" or WH-380-F, "Certification of Health Care Provider For

Family Member's Serious Health Condition". It is the APWU's position that once an employee has submitted an APWU Medical Certification Form or any other form for FML documentation, there is no need or requirement to use a different format or the optional WH-380 forms to provide additional required information. Employees should be advised to use the same form, and simply have their HCP add the additional required information to the original certification, or provide it on a separate sheet of paper.

We will be having on-going discussions with the Postal Service regarding the implementation of changes to the FMLA, and any problems that may develop in the field. If there is an issue concerning whether or not management has a right to certain information, the local union may contact their respective National Business Agent or the Industrial Relations Department.



- A new WH-384, "Certification of Qualifying Exigency For Military Family Leave," and a new WH-385, "Certification for Serious Injury or Illness of Covered Service Member - for Military Family Leave."

Please note that the two new "optional" medical certification forms created by the DOL to replace the old optional WH-380 permit the healthcare provider to provide information beyond what is actually required. For example, while the new "optional" WH-380-E and WH-380-F forms expressly allow the healthcare provider to state the employee's medical diagnosis on the form, they are not required to do so.

The APWU's position has not changed: An employee's medical diagnosis is private health information that need not, and is not, required to be stated on the form. There were no changes in the law to require the employee's medical

Support Growing For H.R. 22 . . .

# Union Asks Members To Contact Congress

Legislation that would provide the Postal Service temporary relief from a crushing financial crisis is gaining wide support in Congress.

More than half of the members of the House of Representatives have signed on as cosponsors of H.R. 22, which would modify a provision of the 2006 postal "reform" law that drains the Postal Service of billions of dollars per year and has contributed to a financial crisis so severe that it threatens the viability of the nation's 235-year-old postal system.

The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act requires the USPS to spend more than \$5 billion per year from 2006 through 2016 to pre-fund retiree healthcare benefits. No other federal agency is subject to this requirement.

"The most important thing Congress can do is to pass H.R. 22," APWU President William Burrus told legislators in testimony before the House Federal Workforce, Post Office, and

sponsors. It would allow the USPS to pay for healthcare benefits for current retirees from its Retiree Health Benefit Fund instead of its operating budget, and would save the Postal Service an

as a result of the nation's economic downturn, which has caused a sharp drop in mail volume and USPS revenue. In Fiscal Year 2008, mail volume declined by 9 billion pieces, the largest single one-year drop in history, and the USPS suffered a net loss of \$2.8 billion — despite cutting costs by \$2 billion. Meanwhile, postal executives continue to slash work hours and services to customers, and scores of facility "consolidations" are in the works.

According to Postmaster General John E. Potter, with continued losses, the USPS would be unable to pay its bills later this year — an outcome that would have a devastating effect on postal workers and consumers, as well as the nation's fragile economy.

*As of April 23, 274 members of Congress have signed on as cosponsors of H.R. 22, which would modify a provision of the 2006 postal "reform" law that drains the Postal Service of billions of dollars per year and has contributed to a crisis so severe that it threatens the viability of the nation's 235-year-old postal system.*

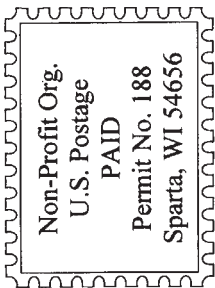
District of Columbia Subcommittee on March 25. Absent this relief, he added, it is unlikely that the Postal Service can survive in its present form.

The bill, introduced on Jan. 6 by Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) and Rep. John McHugh (R-NY), has 252 co-

average of \$3.5 billion per year over the next eight years.

"I urge all APWU members to contact their Congressional representatives to seek additional support for this crucial legislation," Burrus said.

H.R. 22 has taken on added urgency



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### Sample Letter

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Please cosponsor and support HR 22, a bill by Representatives John McHugh and Danny K. Davis, "To amend chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code, to allow the United States Postal Service to pay its share of contributions for annuitants' health benefits out of the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund.

The Postal Service is under serious financial strain due to challenging economic conditions that continue to reduce mail volume. In addition, a requirement imposed by the Postal Accountability & Enhancement Act (PAEA) of 2006 to pre-fund its retiree health benefits liability — a requirement no other agency or major company is required to commit to — is also placing a tremendous burden on the Postal Service.

The payment schedule statutorily mandated by the PAEA requires the Postal Service to make an annual payment ranging from \$5.4 billion to \$5.8 billion from 2007 to 2016. In addition, under PAEA, the Postal Service makes a separate payment to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for its annual retiree health benefit premiums until 2016. When this payment schedule was being considered in 2006, the Postal Service believed the payment plan was achievable; financial circumstances have changed that analysis.

HR 22 would be extremely helpful in providing USPS financial relief, by allowing the Postal Service to pay its retiree health premiums out of the Retiree Health Benefits Trust Fund, rather than the separate payment to OPM. This option simply accelerates a provision in PAEA, which states that after 2016, premium payments would no longer be paid separately, but would be drawn from the Retiree Health Benefits Fund.

I urge you to give this matter your serious consideration, and that you cosponsor, support, and vote for HR 22.

Thank you.  
Sincerely,

**Your job is at stake.  
Please take the time and  
contact your representative.**