

Michigan

MESSENGER

APWU

Volume 41, Number 142
November-December, 2009

Affiliated with: American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, APWU Postal Press Association, Michigan State AFL-CIO & Michigan Labor Press

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by Gary VanHoogstraten,
President

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Keeping An Eye On Our Legislative Issues

Boy, if this article deadline ever surface a lot quicker than most of them. Maybe it is because of some of the recent changes for me. I would like to begin by thanking all of you that sent cards, e-mails, and messages on Facebook to me during this period of rest and recuperating.

I first would like to thank Brother Richard Blake for stepping up and taking over the Presidency for the time being. I would like to also thank all the Ex-

ecutive Board Members who supported this action. Richard is one of the most dedicated, knowledgeable individuals I have ever worked with.

I have recently met with Richard and Darren, going over where we are at and some of the upcoming functions of the Michigan Postal Workers Union. I am sure once we have the information finalized, it will be in this publication, and on the website. The State Convention, as voted on to be in Lansing is set, and will be held April 15 - 17, 2010; as well as the National Presidents Conference

in Kalamazoo in October is arranged as well.

I will tell you the same thing I told Richard and Darren, I am only a phone call away to talk to. I only wish that any member with questions, please try and reach your Union Representative. I am sure they will give you the same answers that I would have.

One of the issues that I have been monitoring is the 1.6.b situation. I have a feeling by some e-mails/articles/21st century, that we may have some action soon on these. I hope so because these

members in these small offices are getting their butts kicked and we have to do something. Hopefully something will be in the makings soon. I also have been keeping an eye on our legislative issues both at the state level and Washington level. Any new information I will pass it out in the field. John Marcotte has been working with congress on many issues in many offices. You should be proud of what John is doing. I think I will make this short and sweet, as former editor for the MPWU Carol Phelps always said.

Until Next Time.



by Michael A. Long,
Editor

Editor's Report

Words Don't Match Actions

Brothers and Sisters,

Let me begin by wishing each of you and your families the best of this Holiday Season. I hope each of you have an enjoyable and safe holiday and look forward to seeing many of you during the upcoming year.

Please keep in mind over this stressful holiday season that if you need to talk to someone the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is there for you, 24 hours a day, 7 Days a week. All you need to do is call or log on. Remember the number: 1-800-EAP-4-You (800-327-4362).

With this in mind, what the heck was management thinking this year, and have you looked at the forecast for next year? Management is saying we are on track to be 7.7 Billion dollars in the hole for next year. 7.7 Billion. While four billion of the seven billion is due to the Postal Reorganization Act that mandates that the Postal Service pre-fund their retirees' health plan, still over three billion dollars in the hole. And what has management done? They say they have cut costs, cut hours and reduced overtime. What planet are they living on? While I am aware each office is unlike mine, and unfortunately unless I am told what is happening in other offices, I am reserved to give you a one-sided view; but if other

offices are being ran like ours, then no wonder we are in the hole.

Lets begin really simply. Overtime. Management wants to cut overtime. Good Idea, but will it happen? Not in this lifetime. Why? Because you have management that continues to change this and that, for what they think will improve something, but in turn, screws it up more than before. Case in point, and I am going to use our Brothers and Sisters in the Mail Handler craft. About 4 - 5 months ago, management finally succeeded in getting overtime cut, almost down to zero (in most of the sections). However, like any manager, they have to justify their existence, so they came up with an idea to change things around to "improve" it. In doing so, people in some areas that were not getting overtime previously are now getting 40 hours of overtime a week. Wow. Definite improvement . . . not. Bet that manager or team of managers got an ata-boy for that suggestion.

Cut hours? Where? I know they are trying to cut the hours in the AOs and have Postmasters and RCA and PMRs do the work, but I hope and pray that those in these offices are contacting their union and filing the appropriate grievances. Article 1.6 specifically states what a Supervisor/Postmaster can do/work when doing our work. Generally speaking, it is what they have histori-

cally have done. If a Postmaster never worked the window (except for lunch or breaks), then they are not allowed to start working it now. If they are, file a grievance. I don't want to harp on this issue, but remember, we are the Union. Stewards and officers might seem to be the face of the union, but we are all the union. An injustice to one is an injustice to all. Those stewards and officers can not be in all areas, all the time, they/we rely on your input and you telling us what is going on. Don't be afraid to step up and let people know what is happening in your offices and/or work areas.

Lastly, in the 3 items, cut costs? Okay, I definitely need to know where this is happening? Because from what I see, it isn't happening here in Michigan for real. Management seems to be still doing business as usual for the most part. And the parts where management is attempting to cut costs, well, let me say, is dumber than a bunch of rocks. One area that I have seen is the reduction of hours and staffing on the windows. Come on. Where do we make our money? Does it just magically appear out of thin air. Yes, some people will buy stamps over the internet, and use the Automated Postal Center, but most of the people I know and have talked to, enjoy talking to a person, face-to-face. Another thing I have witnessed

here in Grand Rapids is the new Staff Cars that are being "leased." How much did we pay for the old lease vehicles? How much was the new cars to lease? The Postal Service has a garage for repairs. Keep the cars we have, have them repaired, and once they reach a certain level, sell them. Stop wasting money by leasing. Every financial advisor tells you to get out of lease as quickly as possible to save money. I guess management isn't listening. And lastly, if management really wanted to save money, a huge way to do this would be the simplest of all. Follow the contract. How much money are we (as a union) winning from management for continually violating the contract. A recent casual case from Pittsburgh netted the APWU members . . . \$75 million. (and no, that is not a typo). Mistakes are one thing, and are easily corrected, but when management makes the same mistakes, over, and over again . . . it not only screams incompetence, it also screams that they don't care about the costs.

One last thing, while I am on my soap box, I am getting tired of hearing the union is to blame for not only the Postal financial woes, but for all unemployment and loss of jobs in the United States. I have said it before and I will probably say it again; union . . . re in

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by John Marcotte, Legislative Director

Legislative Report

Legislative Issues

The president's conference in Maine was a great success. The training on the prevention of contracting out of our window section to private contractors was very informative. Getting the local presidents together to exchange knowledge and to try and chart the course of the APWU through the turbulent next few years is essential for a successful outcome. It was another opportunity to have one on one contact with our national officers including our new Secretary Treasurer. I have every confidence our finances are in good hands until the next election. I did have to disagree with President Burrus in that I feel as union leaders we have an unwritten commitment to the labor movement and our members. For Mr. Mole to jump to a management position after working as a staffer in the Secretary Treasurer's office is a shameful act of selfishness. I hope that our national leaders are seeking to recover all training expenses from Mr. Mole for the previous year as is required in the oath of office. If this "staffer" did not take an oath of office I ask why not? I also have written a resolution to be presented to the delegates at the MPWU's constitutional convention that all headquarters staffers and employees be required to sign a non discloser and non competitive employment agreement that would bar them from working for or disclosing information to the USPS, UPS, FedEx or any other postal union. I do applaud president Burrus on his offer for the APWU to process the mail that receives a discount for less money than the discount. I am confident in our workers abilities and this offer exposes the foolishness of discounting mail and having our workers stand idle.

By the time this is published we will be staring the holiday season square in

the face and our attention will be focused on our families, friends and helping those less fortunate than ourselves. I am constantly impressed with the generosity and good will of my brothers and sisters in the APWU. That spirit of compassion has to be placed behind the Employee Free Choice Act. The benefits and working conditions we take for granted are extremely rare in non-union households.

Make no mistake; it was the union movement that pulled profits down from the few to the many at American companies. The prediction of right wing pundits at that time was disaster for those companies that were unionized and a severe downturn for the American economy. Workers responded with a high point of over 50% of the labor force being unionized, laws protecting unionization getting passed and the creation of the middle class. What happened to the companies that unionized? Unprecedented prosperity and the American economy became the envy of the world. By paying the workers a fair share of the results of their labor this country unleashed the greatest and longest period of prosperity any country has ever seen. Was their still an upper class that made many times the income of the workers they direct? Absolutely. Did business owners, investors and directors make huge sums of money by investing their capital, both real and intellectual? Yes, the number of millionaires in America exploded. This was the great win/win of the labor movement.

So what happened? A fraction of the same people that benefited most from this economic expansion, the owners, investors and directors, felt that their contribution rated a greater return but mostly that the middle class lifestyle was way more than a worker deserved. They started to trumpet the benefits of "unrestricted capitalism". Unfortunately America has a short memory.

Unrestricted capitalism led to sweat shops, child labor, and an economy that would plunge into deep recession every 20 years as workers could not afford the products they created. However due to the labor movement America enjoyed a long period of expansion and prosperity, an entire generation never suffered hard economic times. The propaganda machine of the rich and powerful went on a decade's long campaign against unions. Blaming them for all that was perceived wrong with America. They passed laws giving American companies a tax advantage to move their factories overseas, to eliminate import tariffs on foreign made goods and to remove regulations on companies and banks that protect workers and the American people from corporate greed. As union membership fell from this all out attack so did the financial condition of most American's. In an awesome display of propaganda prowess corporate leaders blamed the unions for the failing state of the economy when the historical fact is that the bigger the union labor force is in America the better the American economy. We now have barely 10% of the workforce unionized and the economy is in a tail spin. Thug tactics by cooperate leadership has prevented unions being formed to try and reverse the trend. Current law allows management to force elections even if 100% of the workers sign up to join a union. This allows management to fire those who run for leadership positions, harass and fire those who vote in the election and to hire strike busting firms to prevent unionization.

The Employee Free Choice Act will allow our fellow workers to become our brothers and sisters in the fight for the restoration of the American dream. At this special time of year the best gift we can give our fellow workers is the right to organize and obtain a fair share of the fruits of their labor. This is the engine that drives the American economy not corporate greed. We all need to contact our federal representatives and urge the passing of the Employee Free Choice Act as a gift to the American worker this blessed season.

Yours in Solidarity and friendship.

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:

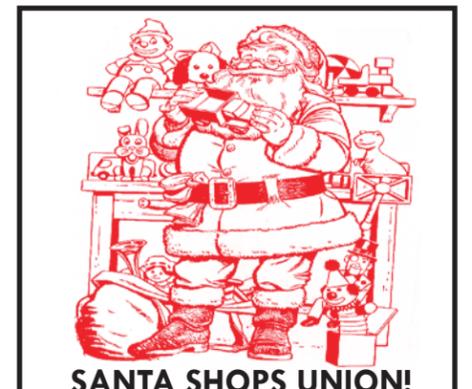
Alpena	Flint	Muskegon	Southwest MI
Battle Creek	480-481	Petoskey	Stevensville
Central MI	498-499	Pontiac	Traverse City
Charlotte	Gaylord	Roger City	Troy Local
Cheboygan	Hillsdale	Saginaw	Western MI
Detroit District	Jackson	Sault Ste Marie	
Farmington	Ludington	Saint Ignace	

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 Jennifer Amos,
HR/Injury
Comp. Director,

HR/Injury Comp. Director's Report

Honor Our Nation's Veterans

Thank you for sending me to the IPWU Human Relations Conference in Chicago Nov 5-7, 2009. I will be sharing what I learned over the next several articles.

Our National Human Relations Department is collecting new backpacks filled with provisions to distribute to "under-served" Veterans. Please discuss this with your local to see if you can contribute to this worthy cause. Your local's generosity will go a long way to provide comfort to a homeless veteran.

The following excerpt is from apwu.org:

Honoring Those Who Serve 'Winterhaven Stand Down' Helps Homeless Veterans — Deadline Jan 12, 2010

Every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, and Coast Guardsman deserves the lasting gratitude of the American people.

That's why the union wants to remind APWU members to honor our nation's veterans by participating in the union's "Winterhaven Stand Down" and other Support Our Troops and Veterans programs (see apwu.org).

'STAND DOWN' HELPS HOMELESS VETERANS

Each year, more than 1 million of our nation's veterans are homeless. This is hardly the thank-you they deserve and hardly the thank-you they have earned. So, this January, for the second consecutive year, the APWU plans to give a hand up to homeless and under-served veterans during the Veterans' Administration's Winterhaven Stand Down. The annual event offers veterans a variety of social services, such as legal and medical aid, employment counseling, and housing assistance. Hot meals, haircuts, showers, warm clothing and other necessities will also be available.

The APWU will have its own station at the Stand Down, where we will distribute donated backpacks filled with items (see <http://www.apwu.org/news/webart/2009/09-136-vets-backpack.pdf>) to help these veterans get through their long days and cold nights. We are the only organization that participates on such a large scale. To ensure we leave no veteran behind, all APWU members, locals, and state organizations are asked to donate at least one new, filled backpack.

These donations should be mailed to: APWU Human Relations Department, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. They must be received **no later than Jan. 12, 2010**.

Last year, thanks to your overwhelming generosity, our efforts were highly

successful and very much appreciated. Our goal this year is to distribute a minimum of 500 filled back packs. We hope you will help.

COP '3-DAY WAITING PERIOD' FOR OWCP (EXCERPT FROM APWU.ORG)

(This article first appeared in the May/June 2007 issue of *The American Postal Worker* magazine)

Despite a long and hard-fought battle by the APWU, on Dec. 20, 2006, President Bush signed into law the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, which included provisions that we vehemently opposed.

One such item is an amendment to Section 8117 of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The amendment, which applies only to USPS employees, establishes a three-day waiting period before Continuation of Pay (COP) will be granted.

TRAUMATIC, OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES

COP is paid only for traumatic injuries, i.e. injuries that occur in a single

day or work shift. A COP-eligible employee may use annual leave, sick leave, or leave without pay during the three-day period.

If the first three days of disability occur during the employee's non-scheduled days, being in a non-pay status also goes towards satisfying this new regulation. If an employee's inability to work extends beyond 14 calendar days, any leave that was used will be restored; if LWOP was used, the employee will be paid.

There has been no change in the USPS policy of paying administrative leave (or leaving the employee in a work status) for time missed due to medical examination or treatment on the day of injury. For more information, see *Injury Compensation*, Handbook EL 505, Chapter 13.4 (see http://www.apwu.org/dept/human-rel/hr-injurycomp-hbk_el505-excerpt.pdf).

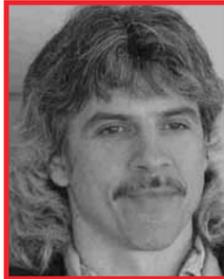
The rules relating to occupational injuries — injuries that result from work activity over the course of more than one day — are unchanged. A three-day waiting period remains in effect before wage-loss compensation will be paid by

OWCP (Office of Workers' Compensation Programs).

However, an employee must be in a non-pay status for three calendar days before he or she will be eligible for compensation. No leave may be used during the three-day period, but if an inability to work extends beyond 14 calendar days, compensation will be paid for any wage loss during the waiting period.

The effective date for the new COP policy was Dec. 20, the day the postal reform law was signed. The COP-3 Day Waiting Period language (see http://www.apwu.org/dept/human-rel/hr-injurycomp-cop_newlawinfo.pdf) establishes how the Postal Service will implement the policy, which has been reviewed by OWCP and found to be in compliance with the amended FECA language.

Note: When recently asked, National Human Relations Director Sue Carney told me 'to satisfy the 3-Day Waiting Period, those days do not have to be consecutive nor do they have to be full days'. I've received this question a few times in the last month or so and wanted to relay the answer.



by Richard Blake,
Clerk Craft
Director

Clerk Craft Report

Feedback From Conference

the attendees clearly indicated their general support and gratitude for the job President Burrus has done, those two positions did **not** exactly receive the support of most of the attendees.

Following President Burrus' address was a lengthy question-and-answer session. Among the interesting tidbits of information which came out of that session were the fact that the current generation of FSS machines (the flat-sorting machines which are supposed to put flat mail into "walk sequence") have thus far **failed** all of the operational tests, and the fact that a national dispute is being prepared with regard to the units of time associated with all of the different types of retail transactions (obviously the Union feels that *on the average* those units of time are unreasonably short).

The following day I bounced back and forth between the Article 12 class taught by National Business Agents Lamont Brooks and Bob Bloomer (with excessing being a constant threat, you can never learn too much about Article 12!) and the Article 37 class taught by Jim McCarthy. The Article 12 class spent quite a bit of time on aspects of excessing which usually don't receive that much attention, such as saved grade, veterans' preference rights, and the rights of un-

encumbered employees. The Article 37 class focused on such issues as the importance of negotiating as many "sections" (per Article 30) as possible (in order to protect the rights of senior Clerks), the proper application of "dual deferments" (such as an SSDA assignment with both scheme and window requirements), how to fight situations where the postal service attempts to remove an employee for "failing to qualify" on a job to which they were assigned, the proper use of "relief-and-pool" employees, and the proper application of the new language in Article 37.4.D (the language which requires the postal service to post newly-created duty assignments in situations where there are *fewer* full-time regular jobs than full-time regular employees such that an employee or employees have remained unencumbered for 120 days). With the constant changing of jobs, excessing within installations, reposting of jobs, and other battles which we now face on a daily basis, it's absolutely essential that we become well-informed about all of these issues.

The next day I attended the class on protecting Clerk craft work in small offices (if that sounds like quite a challenge these days, that's because *it is!*). The class was taught by National Busi-

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by Joe
Wrobel,
Motor Vehicle
Craft Director

Motor Vehicle Craft Report

Wheels And Wrenches

Another year has passed and the holidays are just around the corner. We have seen many of our members retire or get excessed out of our craft. I would like to wish the best to each member that has retired and good riddance to the scabs who left as well. Across the state the MVS Craft directors have been working hard to keep the jobs that we have and preserving or future however it seems that the post office is bound and determined to eliminate the driver jobs that we have. Some Managers have their sights set for some VMF positions as well. I know that I am sounding like a broken record but we have to account for all the work that we do. Drivers make sure that you scan your loads and

fill out those logs when you arrive and depart, get late slips so that we can show the work that is being done. Mechanics have to fill out the work orders and enter a line item for whatever work is being performed on that vehicle regardless how simple or complicated the repair may be.

Looking forward to next year I would like to touch on a couple of things that will be affecting our craft. First we all know that it is a contract year. Since it is a contract year we all know that no matter what happens the post office will be broke(except when it comes to managements pet projects). Our national president said at the last conference that he knows that article 32 in the national agreement will no be part of the discussions. This is not good for our craft

because article 32 allows management to make a cost comparison and the cost must only be considered before contracting out work. The bottom line is that even when it is cheaper to keep the work in house management can chose a contractor in stead as long as they concenter the cost. Over the years we have not been to successful when it comes to article 32 issues we (the union) must start at other ways to address contracting out issues. It is my opinion that this next contract will go to arbitration, I doubt that we can reach a negotiated contract this time.

This brings me to my second topic that I wish to write about. The national election is coming up and so we will once again have to elect our national officers. As a voting member we need

to think about who we are voting for. Over the next few months we will be bombarded with many fliers of who is running for what offices. I hope each and every member does a little research into the person that they want in office. I encourage you to vote for those who backed and supported the MVS Craft in the past and those who support us now. It might take a little effort but make a few phone calls, talk to you local officers, read some of their articles that they have written. We need to educate ourselves so that we can support those who truly care about our craft and just give us lip service.

In closing I would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy new year

Until next time.



by Joanna
Atkinson,
Area 5 Director

Area 5 Director's Report

Some Strange Things Going On

There are so many changes going on and coming up right now, I'm not sure where to start. If you are working in a small office in the 486-487 area, you have heard and seen some very strange things going on. All of a sudden, management is creating full time positions in offices where we have been told in the past there were not enough hours to support a full time job. Clerks in these offices have been waiting for years to have the opportunity to become full time and now have been told it's not going to happen. We have been told these jobs are going to be filled with other people that are being excessed out of their home office. None of this is going to make everyone happy. I can't imagine being forced to move, but in this day and age what choice would you have. There just aren't jobs out there like in days past. I have been trying to explain this to the clerks in the small offices but I know it isn't the answer they want to hear. My biggest fear is that this is just the start of many more unpleasant things to come.

I know I sound like a broken record on this subject, but here goes. Window clerks . . . listen up. Hours are being cut left and right. And if you have been reading this newspaper there have been lots of articles addressing this. Make sure every transaction you do at the window is inputted into your POS/IRT system. This is one of the ways the hours are determined in each office. I realize it takes a little more time, but it really will make a difference on the hours your

office gets. Don't cut corners either. Wait on one customer at a time and be sure to finish each transaction while the customer is there. If the line builds, your supervisor or postmaster should be getting another clerk up on the window. If that doesn't happen file a grievance or fill out a security violation form.

On to a happier thought. Congratulations to all who took the "buy out" and are now or will be retiring really soon. I hope all of you have many years of happy retirement. I just checked the listing of phone numbers from the last issue of *the Michigan Messenger* and I see that my work

number is the only one listed. Please call my cell phone anytime you need to get a hold of me. My phone number is 989-295-5454. I do work midnights but I am normally up by 1 p.m. If you leave me a message I will call you back as long as you leave your phone number and name.

TURNNEY TALKS

op. ed. by Linda J. Turnney,
NBA Illinois and Michigan
December 2009

TARP is the Troubled Asset Relief Program. This fund can be established to create jobs by enabling community banks to lend money to small and medium sized businesses. The idea is that if small business can get credit, they will create jobs.

Political pundits have long held that midterm elections will be a referendum on the economy. It is understandable that Democrats are nervous about midterm elections with high unemployment rates. Tapping into TARP to assist with creating jobs seems to Congress the best way to deal with the jobless recovery.

Spending more money is an unpopular idea because most voters don't distinguish between TARP stimulus and the big Wall Street "too big to fail" bail out. A new report from the Treasury has estimated that TARP won't be as expensive as it was supposed to be, because the large banks

are paying back their loans faster than expected. Bank of America finished paying off its loan today. That is all great, but the loans to the banks still saddled taxpayers with an estimated \$140 billion over the next 10 years, down from \$340 billion estimated earlier. That is a lot of money, all for them, none for us.

Be Brave Democrats, give us reform. We voted for it and we want it. TARP will assist in creating jobs not big government programs. Hopefully voters in swing districts will know that paying down the deficit is only part of the recovery. The other part is jobs.

Republicans argue that spending more money on a new jobs bill only creates the perception that the stimulus hasn't worked. If the \$787 billion didn't do the job, Republicans believe another few billion will not do the trick. Republicans have already had a field day bashing the jobs stimulus plan.

I have been to Detroit where un-

employment has reached 29%. In the evening, lights are out in vacant high rise office buildings. Hotels, homes and hopes have been abandoned. I have been to Flint where it is more common to see houses boarded up than filled with families. When we see jobs come back to Michigan, we will see America recover.

President Obama and Democrats must give us reform and take a gamble when it comes to job creation. There is risk that it will not work and unemployment will remain at over 10%, but doing nothing at all is not the answer. Democrats will be blamed for the poor economy in the next election. If unemployment numbers start to go down, they can take the credit.

Take a moment to call your representatives; let them know funding TARP will create jobs for our children, for our country.

It is important to know your representative in Congress, but it is more important that your representatives know you.



by John
Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Veteran's Report

Important Information

HOLIDAYS

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

AGENT ORANGE UPDATE

The basis of an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), has Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki making a decision to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to as Agent Orange. The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B cell leukemia's; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease. If you need assistance in filing a claim, see your County Veterans' Representative or see a VSO from a Veterans' Organization.

SCAM TIME

The VA has received reports that veterans are being contacted by a "Patient Care Group" that claims it is helping to administer the VA's prescription medicine program. "Patient Care Group" is saying the VA recently changed its pharmacy billing procedures, therefore a personal credit card number is now required for prescription payments in advance of filling those prescriptions. **This is a scam! Do not provide credit card information over the phone to anyone who claims to represent the VA!** The VA has not changed their pharmacy procedures, and they do not ask veterans to disclose personal financial information over the phone. If you should receive such a call, do not give them any information. Tell them you are busy right now, try to get a name and callback number. Then report that information to your local police.

LOWE'S DISCOUNT

I've written about this before, but now there's a new twist to the story. Usually on certain Holidays, Lowe's announces in the local sales papers that Veterans' will be given a special 10% discount for any purchases made at their local Lowe's store. Now Lowe's has taken this one step further. Show the cashier proof that you're a Veteran, before you make your purchase, and you will be given a 10% discount whenever you shop at Lowe's. Now if you don't have an I.D. card, how about

showing the cashier one of your I.D. cards from the Veterans' Organization that you're a member of. You know, like the D.A.V., V.V.A., M.O.P.H., V.F.W., P.L.A.V., or The American Legion, or one of the other Veterans' Organizations. How about your vehicle registration for your Veterans license plate. What do you mean you don't have a Veterans license plate? **WHY NOT?** Get one the next time your plate comes up for renewal, and let everyone know that you're a Veteran, and **PROUD OF IT!**

SET BACK

A federal Appeals court ruled that a fundamentalist Kansas church protesting at the funeral of a Marine who was killed in Iraq is protected speech and did not violate the privacy of the service member's family, reversing a lower court's award of \$5 million. "Notwithstanding the distasteful and repugnant nature of the words being challenged in these proceedings, we are constrained to conclude that the defendants' signs are constitutionally protected," Circuit Court Judge Robert B. Kind wrote in the majority opinion. Mr. Snyder, the dead Marine's father, said he will appeal the decision to the U. S. Supreme Court. Good Luck and God Bless You Mr. Snyder.

FORT HOOD

Please keep the family members of those who lost their lives at Fort Hood recently in your prayers. As far as the shooter goes, I think the Army has brought down on themselves one or more of the well known terms we Veterans' all were made aware of during our time served. FUBAR—SNAFU—BOHICA

FREE TICKETS

Here's a new website I've encountered. It's called "Veteran Tickets Foundation." They supposedly get free tickets to all kinds of events for Veterans'. Naturally they expect you to contribute, but if you get a chance, and don't give out too much personal information, check it out. Go to www.vettix.org. Good Luck, and BE CAREFUL.

VHCBRTA

The Veterans' Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act was signed by President Obama on October 22, 2009. For the first time ever, the Department of Veterans' Affairs health care system can be assured it will be funded on time and adequately every year. It has taken more than 20 years to get this approval of advanced appropriations. This legislation will help

ensure timely access to medical care for the men and women who have served this great nation. The advanced funding will give the Department of Veterans' Affairs up to a full year to plan for the most effective and efficient way of delivering medical care. Congress now has the authorization to approve Veterans' medical care funding one year in advance to better meet the anticipated demand for Veterans' health care services.

WIN A HARLEY

Interested in trying to win a Harley-Davidson Sportster 1200 Custom Motorcycle?

The DAV is holding a raffle for the Sportster. Tickets are \$10.00 each and you can get an order form by calling 1-888-448-2328. The drawing will be held on May 27, 2010 at the DAV Department of Michigan Headquarters.

PURPLE HEART STAMP

Don't forget to keep writing to the "Citizen Advisory Committee, C/O Stamp Department, U. S. Postal Service, 1735 No. Lynn St. Suite 5013, Arlington, VA 22209.

Ask them to make The Purple Heart stamp a FOREVER stamp. Get your family and friends involved in this.

Words Don't Match Actions

continued from page 1

existence for one main reason . . . to give the workers a voice collectively. Management is in charge of how this and every company is run. If it is run badly, then blame the ones that are in charge, not the workers who do the actual work. The reason there are no jobs in America is not because of unions asking for a fair days wage for a fair days work; it is because management wanted more. More money and more profits and the only way to do this was to ship our jobs overseas to places that earn \$1.00 a day or less. Like I said in the beginning of this paragraph, stop blaming the workers for management's misdeeds. Lay the blame where it rightfully belongs.

In closing, I currently do not have any dates for the next District Meeting,

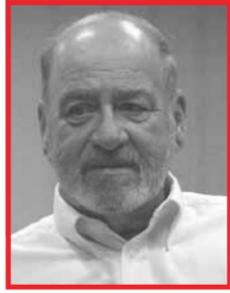
which will be held in the Area 7, 8, & 9 areas; however, the two dates I do have is: April 15-17, 2010 for the State Constitutional Convention in Lansing, Michigan; and August 23 - 27, 2010 for the National Convention in Detroit, Michigan. Mark them down, and I look forward to seeing you there.

Lastly, due to the upcoming State convention in April, this edition was the last edition where articles will be accepted by everyone. Starting in the January/February and the March/April editions, to ensure Labor Law is followed, only articles from those members who have normally submitted articles will be allowed to be printed in *the Michigan Messenger*.

Again, I wish you and yours the best of this holiday season.

Until next time. Yours in Solidarity.





by Al LaBrecque, Retiree's Chapter President

Retiree Involvement

COLA And Medicare

As senior retirees may already be aware; there will be **NO Cost-Of-Living-Allowance (COLA)** increase in our annuities or for those eligible for Social Security benefits for 2010 due to a minus Consumer Price Index (CPI), a measurement for inflation. As a result, if there is no S.S. COLA, a federal law prevents Medicare Part B premiums from increasing for 95% of Medicare beneficiaries. Only high-income beneficiaries would be subject to a premium increase. Therefore, Medicare Part B monthly premiums are expected to remain at \$96.40 for 2010 for most, if not all of us. The CPI calculation does not meet the true costs for today's seniors, who spend far more on medical care, prescription drugs, energy and housing.

There has been legislation in the last, and this Congress, that would establish a "seniors only" CPI to account for seniors' different buying habits and ensure a truer COLA. (Source: 1st Dist. Congressman, Bart Stupak (D)-Menominee). President Obama has proposed a one-time \$250. payment to S.S. recipients in the absence of a COLA for 2010 to provide some relief to millions of seniors. It's unclear if that one-time payment would apply to postal/federal annuitants. Don't spend it until you see it!

Approaching Age 65? This seems to be the time of year when there's an increase of inquiries regarding Medicare Parts A & B, possibly by seniors who will be turning 65 in the coming year. The Nov./Dec. 2008 'Retirement Involvement' column was dedicated to covering the basics of Medicare and addressing the most often asked questions. If any APWU retiree who is closing in on that 'magic' age 65 would like an updated copy of that article, I am offering to send it to them upon request. Send requests to me at: **3550 Wilson St.; Spruce, MI 48762.** (Be sure to include your return address). This is an important milestone in ones retirement and health care coverage, not to be taken lightly. **DO NOT** wait until the last minute, or God forbid, allow the enrollment period to expire. Seniors have a seven (7) month time frame to enroll; 3 months prior to the month of your 65th birthday, the month you turn 65, and the 3 months following the month you turn 65.

Retirement Counseling: This may be 'too little, too late' for the recent stampede of VER retirees, but on Sept. 21, 2009, the APWU and USPS reached a pre-arbitration settlement over a dispute concerning management's responsibility to provide individual retirement counseling for employees. In

2007, the Postal Service centralized its individual retirement counseling process by conducting counseling primarily by phone utilizing retirement specialists at the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC). The intent of the change is that postal employees receive consistent information and retirement processing nationwide.

The settlement provides that local management must arrange reasonably private space for employees who wish

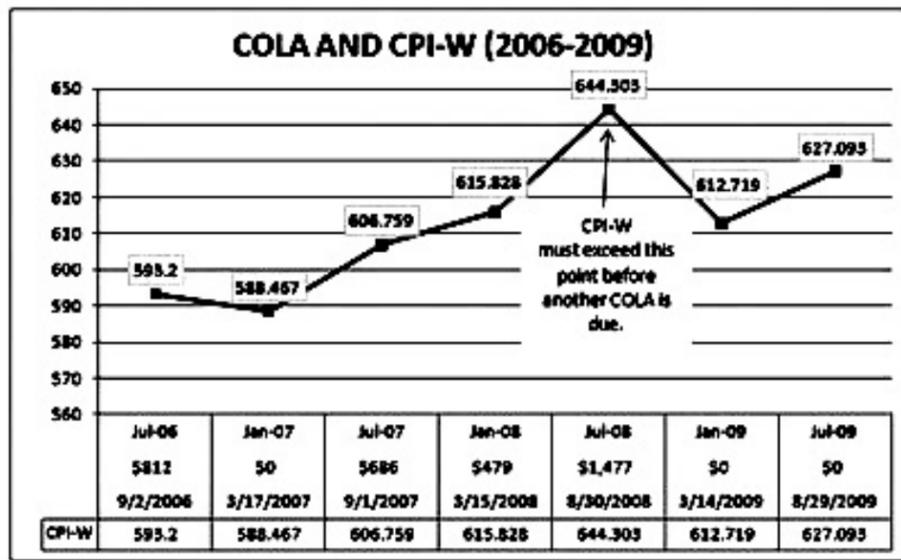
of you have probably heard that APWU Pres. Burrus announced that he will not seek re-election, and that in the week following the Retirees' Dept. and All Craft Conferences, APWU Sec.-Treas. Terry Stapelton announced his resignation to take a financial position with the AFL-CIO. Subsequently, N.E. Region Coordinator Liz Powell was appointed by Burrus to fill the vacancy of Sec.-Treas. Other than the statement by Burrus to the Retirees' Dept. attendees

Retiree Chapters which I attended. Eastern Region National Retiree Delegate/Pittsburgh Retiree Chapter Pres., John Richards, assisted by Maryann Medina, Pres., San Francisco Retiree Chapter, gave an excellent 3-hour presentation in which there was considerable participation from the floor and a lot of information and ideas exchanged, particularly revenue uses. It was stressed that retiree dues rebate revenues are to be used **ONLY** by and for Retiree Chapters and their membership, and strictly accounted for. Another issue stressed is that we will be quizzing candidates for the 2010 national Union officer elections on their positions regarding greater retiree involvement in the APWU. From the variety of subjects batted around in this session, I fully expect to see some thought provoking retiree related Resolutions being presented to the Constitution Committee at the 2010 National Convention.

The Day #2 afternoon session and morning session on Day #3 featured numerous presenters including; Financial Accountability, Aging With Grace, Elder Care, Mental Health and Alzheimer's Assn., Elder Law Services, Care Giving, Legislative Initiatives, APWU Health Plan for 2010 vs. other FEHBP Plans, Social Security, Thrift Savings, CSRS & FERS, Communications, the value of belonging to the AFL-CIO Alliance for Retired Americans, and a lot of discussion and debate on all the subjects. Each presenter was well versed in their field of expertise, and gave instruction in easy to understand (layman's) terms. The Workshops were truly in keeping with our long-standing advocacy to provide seminars and instruction to the already retired membership. In conclusion: Well Done!

The Day #3 afternoon General Session featured a "History of the Retirees' Dept." and the growing pains experienced through National Conventions beginning in 1996, by former Western Region Retiree Delegate, Byron Denton. Byron recounted how we collaborated on many controversial Resolutions, the victories and the rejections, including finally the right to elect our own Dept. Director. I was given the opportunity to assist Byron on recounting our struggles to advance the Dept., including establishing Local and State Chapters and distribution of dues rebates as operating revenue for Chapters, and the several significant amendments to the APWU Constitution, noting that we still have a long ways to go. I believe that discussion was an eye opener for many of our retiree delegates from across the country.

We endured the usual parade of *continued on page 7*



to have individual retirement counseling **on the clock.** The employee is also entitled to have their spouse and/or advisor present during the process. In addition, employees who cannot begin or complete the process of obtaining counseling from HRSSC without assistance have to be offered assistance by local management. Whether an employee is unable to start or complete the retirement counseling will be determined jointly by local management and the local Union on a case-by-case basis. (Source: Greg Bell, APWU Dir. Industrial Relations).

Comment: Retirement counseling via phone with HRSSC has not always met its "intent". Some employees report that they experienced no problems; others describe it as a SNAFU. Like most USPS operations; there's excellent counselors, and then there's the incompetent. But, it is on the clock! I just have to wonder how this works out for the small Associate Office employees. My advice is to plan well ahead, and request retirement counseling from management well in advance. If you experience ANY glitches in the process, contact your Local or State Union representative pronto!

FERS: On Sept. 28th, President Obama signed the Defense Authorization bill (P.L. 111-84) which included permitting FERS employees to initially credit one-half, and in 2014 all, of their unused sick leave toward retirement. It's about time!

Retirees' Dept. Conference . . . held in Las Vegas, Sept. 30-Oct.2, was an intense 3-day exercise. By now, most

that he was still "in charge" for the next (at that time) 13 months, I will reserve comment on the current and upcoming 'musical chairs' at APWU Hq.

It was my intent to report in detail the events of the 3-day APWU Retirees' Dept. Conference, along with my observations and comment in this column. However, to do so would be far too much to digest in one sitting. As I said; it was an intense 3-days, so I will reserve observations and comment for a future 'R.I.'. Instead, I will give an overview of the Conference and Workshops. I have to say at the outset that Retirees' Dept. Dir., Judy Beard, put together an excellent program from top to bottom, bringing in presenters with expertise in their given fields and providing a wealth of reference materials.

Following the opening General Session at which Pres. Burrus announced his impending retirement 13 months hence, retirees and crafts went to their respective Conferences. Sister Beard outlined the programs which we were to be treated to, and a preview of plans for the 2010 pre-National Convention Retirees Dept. Conference in Detroit. The remainder of Day #1 was an excellent PowerPoint presentation by an expert on Medicare, concentrating on Parts A&B, and responding to the many questions raised.

Day #2 was dedicated to the Workshops portion of the Conference, divided into two classes; Hands-on Computer Training, the other being Effective

— COLA And Medicare —

continued from page 6

national officers coming in to tell us what great folks we retired members are, etc., etc., with the usual pitch for COPA (which retirees are the largest single contributors). More on that for another column! Finally, Sister Beard announced that she is establishing an automatic sign-up of active members who can submit a pre-retirement Form 1187A that will serve to enroll new retirees into the Dept. She is also establishing monthly conference calls to Local and State Chapters, tentatively at 4:00 PM, the 2nd Wednesday of each month for Dept. updates and input from the field. She has proposed a quarterly Dept. Newsletter, and is in the process

of developing a Dept. Logo to provide us an identity as enjoyed by other APWU subordinate bodies; PPA, P.O.W.E.R., and Auxiliary. Sister Beard has developed an updated "Vital Papers" booklet designed to serve as your retirement records organizer, and to assist your legal guardians, power of attorney, medical advocate, and survivor's information they will need to make decisions on an annuitant's behalf and/or execute deceased annuitant's estates. Chapters can order a supply for their members, and members in the field can request a booklet from the Retirees' Dept. This should be a "must" for every retired member to keep in a safe place and to inform their spouse/beneficiaries of its

location for "when that time comes".

This has been but a thumbnail sketch of events at the Conference/Workshops which were not only intense, but as productive as any previous Retirees' Dept. Conferences. Director Beard has demonstrated that she is listening and acting in retiree members' best interests, and in my view, has proved the value of retired members having the right to elect our own Director despite the dire predictions of those who opposed our right to vote. After so many years of stonewalling and rejection, this has been like a breath of fresh air! Still, we have a long, long ways to go. As always, it was great to be with "my kind of people" again. The

atmosphere among Sister & Brother retiree leaderships from across the country, acceptance even among active craft delegates and "some" national officers was noticeably improved, giving renewed hope for advancement at the 2010 National Convention. Hope springs eternal!

With "St. Antler Day" (deer season) just two days away as this is written, and this being the last "M.M." before 2010, it doesn't seem like Thanksgiving is just around the corner. So, I take this opportunity to wish all my APWU/MPWU Sisters & Brothers **A Very Merry & Blessed Christmas, and a Happy & Healthy 2010!**
Be Strong!

Feedback From Conference

continued from page 3

ness Agents Morline Guillory, Dennis Taff, and Bob Kessler (hands down the funniest National Business Agent), and it covered the entire range of threats to the Clerk craft in small offices such as the use of casuals, the improper use of PMR's, the theft of craft work by management, and the crossing of crafts. I only wish that every APWU steward or officer who represents either small associate offices or small city stations was able to take this class, since every one of the above poses real threats to the existence of thousands of Clerk craft jobs all over the country.

The final day of the conference, I attended the "Roadmap to Winning" class taught by National Business Agents Jeff Kehlert and Marie Robins. This class focused on the critical importance of properly preparing and documenting your grievances beginning at Step 1. The class covered management's obligation to share information with the Union no later than Step 2, how to combat arguments raised by management which weren't raised at the Step 2 meeting, and many other procedural issues in the grievance procedure. Unfortunately, while I completely understand the purpose and value of a class such as this — that is, having the best possible grievance to present to an arbitrator — it overlooks the fact that (at least in my experience) no more than one out of twenty grievances which are appealed past Step 2 ever actually see the light of day in front of an arbitrator;

they're either resolved (or withdrawn) prior to the arbitration hearing, or given a perfunctory glance in a "shake-out".

It's my intention to copy all four of the Clerk Craft CD's which were given to the attendees and send copies to all of the MPWU Area Directors who weren't able to be present, since the information on those CD's is so critical to our success. If there are any Locals out there who weren't able to send anyone to the Conference, I'll be happy to send copies of the discs to any such Local; just let me know.

Recent retirements — our National Union has become quite concerned about our ability to "track" all of the recent retirements, particularly in small associate offices and MAL offices, and to ensure that the duty assignments held by those recently-retired employees don't just "disappear". **I would ask that anyone who works in a small MAL office where someone recently retired - whether full-time regular or PTF - PLEASE notify your Area Director. There is a VERY REAL POSSIBILITY that the work performed by these recently-retired employees will either be appropriated by management, or divided up among RCA's, casuals, PMR's, and other non-career (non-Clerk) employees. We CANNOT permit this to happen, but we NEED YOUR HELP. DO NOT assume that your Area Director knows that someone recently retired from your office.**

In Solidarity.



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October 27, 2009

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REMARKS BY AMIC
DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

Mr. Robert Romanowski
1401 Liberty Pl
Sicklerville, New Jersey 08081-5704

Dear Mr. Romanowski,

Knowing of the concerns you have regarding outsourcing of jobs and certain free-trade agreements, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on this matter.

I think you will be pleased to know that like you I have generally opposed the outsourcing of jobs and those free-trade agreements (FTA) that do not take into consideration human rights, American job losses, and environmental protections.

As you may know, no action has been taken on the proposed FTA's with Panama, Columbia, or South Korea, nor has implementing legislation for these treaty proposals been introduced in this session of Congress. During debate on these treaties in the last session of Congress deep concern was expressed about the violence in Columbia, especially against labor leaders. Also during debate on the South Korea treaty competing U.S. industries, especially the fragile U.S. automobile manufacturing industry prevented its implementation. Debate on Panama, which trades little with the United States, is now centered on amending the minimum number of workers required to start a union, with many wanting it reduced from 40 to 20; and continuous concerns about Panama's status as a tax haven and its refusal to enter into any tax information exchange agreement.

I particularly had concerns about the free-trade agreement with Colombia in light of the attacks on the labor movement there. For example, 39 trade unionists were murdered there in 2007. Union representation in Colombia is only around 5 percent, primarily because of the violence used against organizers and the legal challenges those involved with collective bargaining face every day.

I think you may also be interested to know that I voted against the CAFTA implementation legislation, HR 3045, when it was brought to the floor of the House in 2005. Regrettably, CAFTA (sometimes referred to as DR-CAFTA) missed the opportunity to ensure fair trade and fully address important labor, agricultural and public health care concerns both here at home and in the partner countries.

CAFTA, like other trade agreements, was considered under "fast-track trade authority." Thus, Congress had to either fully accept or reject the proposal without reforming or amending it. On several occasions over the years, I have voted against legislation granting the President fast-track authority in trade negotiations. I believe that the fast-track trade process bypasses the basic protections afforded by the Constitutional principle of checks and balances. Unfortunately, the take-it-or-leave-it concept opens the door to the acceptance of unbalanced trade pacts. Despite my no vote, the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2001, providing "fast-track trade authority" was approved, as was DR-CAFTA and the earlier North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), both of which I also opposed.

Additionally, I will also continue to work to provide a level playing field for American products and to prevent inferior products from entering our country. For example, in this session of Congress, I am a cosponsor of H.Res.44. This resolution condemns the People's Republic of China for its socially unacceptable business practices, especially the manufacturing and exportation of unsafe products, the disregard for the environment, and exploitative employment practices.

Once again, I appreciate the concerns you have about the outsourcing of jobs and certain free-trade agreements. Please feel free to contact me again about this or any other matter of interest to you.

Sincerely,
Chris Smith
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

CHS:dk

FYI

ASK FOR THE RIGHT MASK

As printed in the Sept./Oct.2009 Postal Worker Newsletter, employees should be aware that unless they ask for an N95 face-filtering piece (FFP), management will give them a less-protective "surgical" mask.

The Postal Service has attempted to justify the decision to distribute the less expensive and less effective masks by citing a 2007 OSHA publication, "Preparing Workplaces for an influenza Pandemic."

However, the guidelines point out the surgical masks are intended to protect other people against illness from infected people wearing the masks: They are not designed to prevent the inhalation of the small, airborne contaminants like those that cause the flu.

The USPS decision to issue surgical masks circumvents an agreement between the APWU and the postmaster general following the 2001 anthrax attacks. It also contradicts guidelines in the "Postal Service's Pandemic Influenza Plan," a January 2007 publication that reinforced the Postal Service's commitment to the voluntary use of filtering face-piece respiratory protection rather than "surgical masks".

While saying that they would provide an N95 FFP if it were "specifically requested." Postal Service officials told APWU representatives in June that the USPS Pandemic Flu plan was not applicable because no nationwide swine flu pandemic had been declared.

"The procedures for the use and distribution of N95 FFP's are already in place in USPS facilities," says Cory Thompson.

WHAT TO PACK IN AN EMERGENCY KIT

A second wave of swine flu could hit this fall, and health experts recommend creating an emergency kit if the outbreak is severe. Of course, it's also a good idea to keep a kit for any emergency.

What you need for a flu outbreak. A two-week supply of food and water in case you're confined to your home.

- Fever reducers, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen.
- Cough and cold medications containing chlorpheniramine, diphenhydramine, oxymetazoline, and pseudoephedrine and lozenges with dyclonine, glycerin, or honey.
- Hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, such as Purell, to kill virus when soap and water aren't available.

• Surgical masks with a rating from the FDA of at least N-95 to help prevent spreading the flu. Masks need to be replaced often and disposed of after use.

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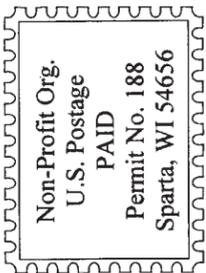
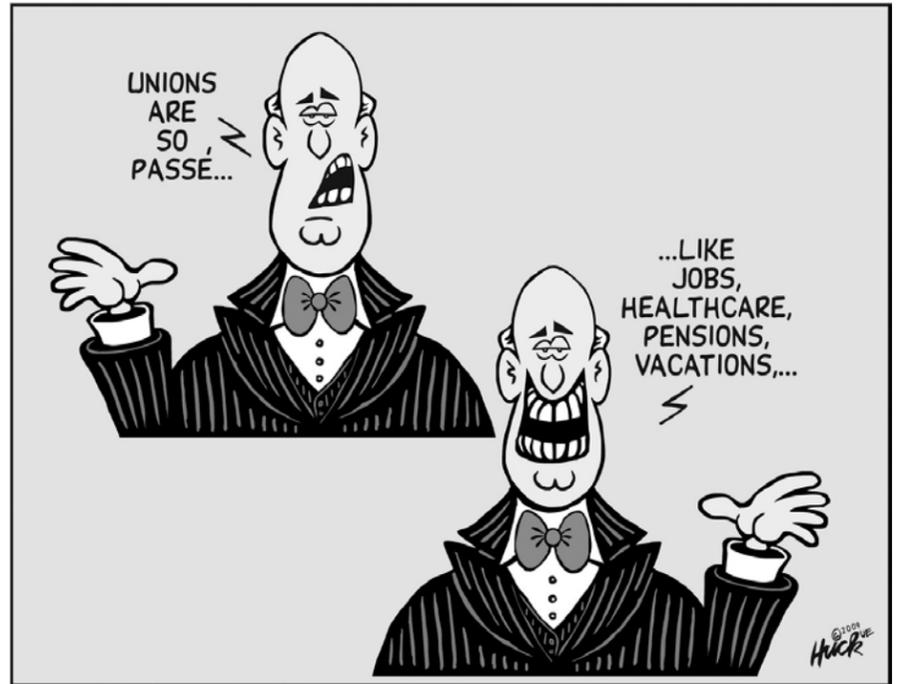
BE PREPARED FOR SWINE FLU

The Government has asked the public to stay home if they are sick and to keep their children home if they are sick to minimize the spread

of the H1N1 influenza disease.

Protect yourself from the swine influenza epidemic and protect yourself from attendance discipline.

If you visit the doctor for treatment — GET DOCUMENTATION! Make a copy. The Flu itself does not usually qualify for FMLA coverage but any complications associated with it most likely will. So protect yourself, your family and your job.



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