

Michigan

MESSENGER

APWU
APWU

Volume 41, Number 144
January-February, 2010

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

Hoping All Will Work Out

I just returned this morning from a short drive to Gaylord to spend the night as requested by Local President John Marcotte. The purpose of this stay was to enjoy a beautiful fulfilled evening with many union brothers and sisters at a post Christmas/Installation of Officers evening. During the evening I got to spend time conversing with many old Union friends from the Local and their spouses. I was totally impressed with the turnout. I believe their local has around 70 members and by the time the last person was counted, there were 95 members and spouses. This was a terrific turnout for this size local. I commend your local for the entire evening and attendance.

Continuing on with more of the little guy, we have to look and see what's in

the future for those in these small AO's and MAL's. I can only describe it as disruption, reduction, and pure hell. The powers above, both management and National Union, have to realize that these are postal employees and

veys and God only know what's going to happen this time around when all is said and done. How can he expect these employees to fill out these forms without any knowledge as to what the original 1.6 surveys stated.

procedure is a mistake and never should have been placed in the hands they were dealt to. Hopefully, all will work out for the best but I have my doubts.

There were many retirements taken from the entire state of Michigan with this buy out. We all know that there and many positions/jobs out there that are open. You have to make sure that management does the correct thing as far as the contract says about vacant positions.

If you have any questions or know of these certain positions, please contact your Union Officials.

In closing, we are in the middle of the winter season and I can say for a fact that here in Bay City it has been a mild winter so far. But beware, it is still Michigan and we have to be careful as to what is coming next.

Be Careful and God Bless.

"You have to make sure that management does the correct thing as far as the contract says about vacant positions."

Union members also. President Burrus recently has put it out in print in the national tabloid, a 1.6.b survey form to be filled out by employees in these small offices. I think this is ridiculous. You had trained union officials and retirees to complete these surveys the first time and now all the sudden, he is relying on these employees to finish them. There was a starting point from the first sur-

You also know that there are some very favorite employees that will lean towards their management buddies to stay in good faith with them. You also will have what some call non-union members, just one of the terms, filling out these forms. How do you think they will fill them out with some of their co-workers, union members, if they are not the best of friends. I believe this



by Michael A.
Long,
Editor

Editor's Report

Actions And Words — Are They Beginning to Match? I Wish

I would like to begin by thanking everyone for their feedback to my last article. While it is nice to know that you are being read, it is ever better to know that the Michigan Messenger is being read and used.

Before I get down to the ridiculous stuff management has tried to pass off the last two months, I would be remiss if I didn't thank Gary VanHoogstraten for his time, energy, and fortitude as the President of this State Union. For those who do not know, Gary has taken some time off as President, and the Executive Board has appointed Richard Blake to be the interim President (as well as doing his Clerk Craft Director duties). While Richard is doing a great job filling the roles, and I know Gary is just a phone call or e-Mail away, it sometimes is disheartening to know that things do change. Sometimes those that you have become accustomed to working with on a daily basis, when change does occur,

it takes a bit to get back into step with a new beat.

In this edition of the Messenger, you will find the Convention calls for the 22nd Biennial Constitutional Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union and the 5th Biennial Retirees' Convention. For those locals and individuals planning on attending the convention, please make sure to read over the information, and, if you haven't already done so, make sure to visit the state's website. More information is available there.

In addition to the Convention call, by the time you receive this edition of the Michigan Messenger, the District Meeting will probably only be days away. I hope to see as many of you as possible at this venue.

Now, up on my soap box. If you go to the website and review my March/April 2009 article, you will notice I had an issue with the supposed cut of 15% of management back then. I said

it wouldn't happen, and guess what. . . it didn't. Now, the opposite is happening, is at least in the Greater Michigan District, they are promoting individuals into management. (Heck, we have lost some union officials because they took management's offer to change sides.) Instead of going through the Associate Supervisor Program (which management cancelled), interested individuals need only go through two tests and an interview, and poof, if you "pass", you become a supervisor. If management was truly serious about cutting back, how can they justify this new round of supervisors? Two things I have been saying all along . . . 1 . . . their actions don't match their words, and 2 . . . they will never cut their own.

In the same issue stated above, I had an issue with the windows being closed at lunch time in the smaller AOs. However, now, and I know they have been doing it all along, but come on, the windows

being open for one hour on Saturdays? The one day of the week when most customers have the day off and are able to catch up on their mailings, buying stamps, money orders, etc from their local Post Offices; and what do these "customers" find when they show up at our doors. Closed. Saturday: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. One hour, and I don't know about you, when it is my day off, I like to sleep in. I am not even thinking about heading out of the house until at least 9:30 or so; and now come to find, the Postal Service is closed. While a larger branch (ten or more miles away) might still be open, customers want convenience and ease of access. Who was the idiot who came up with this one? Let me guess, whoever it was received a promotion.

In closing, I hope all of you have an enjoyable and safe remainder of winter. Get out and enjoy all that Michigan has to offer.

Yours in Solidarity.



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by John Marcotte, Legislative Director

Legislative Report

Legislative Issues

This edition of the Legislative report will be dedicated to trying to explain the mess the current health care bill has evolved into and why there is so much opposition by the American people to this bill including some union households.

There is no debate that the current health care system in the United States is in need of reform. All concerned parties agree on that fact. As is the case of almost all legislation out of Washington these days the devil is in the details. At around a thousand pages both the senate and house bills are overwhelming in their volume and virtually impossible for anyone, including the sponsors and supporters of these bills, to explain exactly what these bills will accomplish if signed into law. Since this legislation will effect virtually every American this fact is disturbing to most and outrageous to some.

The concern for some union households came when the discussion turned to how to pay for health insurance for the currently uninsured that this bill mandates. One of the proposed ways of funding health care for others was to tax people with so called "Cadillac" health care plans. These were plans that provided coverage that Washington determined excessive and extravagant. Some of these "Cadillac" plans are health care plans for union households that were hard won at the negotiating table in lieu of monetary compensation. These were not millionaires trying to hide their income they are our brothers and sisters in the labor movement. This led to the question if Washington could find these union plans excessive, what about my union negotiated health care? Can they change the standard at any time? The union movement has always been an inclusive group, striving for

higher wages and standards of living for all Americans not just their members. As such the unions have steadfastly been behind health care reform for decades. To have some unions pay a disproportionate share of health care reform initially and the possibility of a future expansion of this tax doing the same to more unions in the future weakened support for this bill in union circles.

As your Legislative Director it is my Constitutional Obligation to inform you of the legislative events that directly affect Michigan Postal Workers and as I have watched the creation and debate over both of these health care bills I have two overriding concerns. Why do we have to try and fix all areas of health care in a one size fits all bill and what is the hurry to pass this same bill. The scope of American health care is vast and complex. To attempt to address all areas has several risks the biggest being in order to pass such a broad piece of legislation you must appease many different factions. So instead of debating insurance company reform, medical legal reform and universal coverage by themselves they are grouped together. This makes those opposed to legal reform and those opposed insurance reform have more power than they would individually. The result is a watered down bill that is more acceptable to these special interests. This also makes it very hard for the electorate (you and I) to understand what parts of health care reform our representatives are for and what they are against. This grouping of issues in health care is not good for true reform and makes it hard for the American people to understand the issues and lend support to health care reform and hold Congress accountable. The rush to pass health care makes me think back in recent history of the times the American people were told that there was no time for debate and swift passage through

Congress was required. The first was the War in Iraq. With normal debate facts such as, weapons of mass destruction were not in Iraq, that the current number of troops available will not be enough to secure and reform Iraq, the cost in lives and dollars, and the timetable for troop extraction would have come to light. Congress fast tracked the debate and our boys went to war in Iraq in insufficient numbers, without proper support and with no clear exit strategy. The second was the "bailout" of the Banks. Too big to fail was the mantra. Congress again fast tracked a bill this time to prevent recession. The result is bank executives making record bonuses, larger than those prior to the collapse, while the number of foreclosures and bankruptcies for the average American is at an all time rate. Here is how it works. The Government writes bonds to generate money to give to these banks (we have no money so we take on a debt or a loan in the form of a bond). The interest rate on these bonds is around 5%. The banks get the money from the government as a loan at .25%, yes ¼ of one per cent. The banks do not loan the money to small business or individuals to help the economy, they buy government bonds at 5% and pocket a no risk profit of 4.75% on the same money we gave them at .25%!!! This triggered big bonuses for the management of these banks because they made a large net profit by using their massive investment skill. So by not debating the bill and putting restrictions on this bailout Congress allowed the same banks to that caused all the hardship on the American people to then steal from us.

I am a big supporter of health care reform however I am very concerned with the way Congress is going about creating this same reform. I urge all of you to become educated on the issue and contact your representative with your concerns. Health care reform is either worth being done right or not done at all.

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:

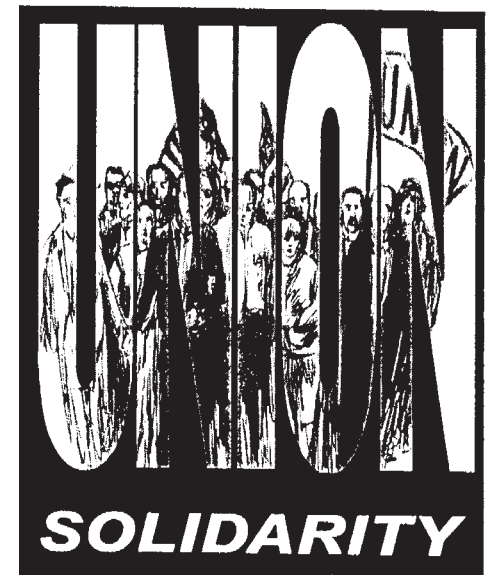
Alpena	Flint	Petoskey	Stevensville
Battle Creek	480-481	Pontiac	Traverse City
Central MI	498-499	Roger City	Troy Local
Charlotte	Gaylord	Saginaw	Western MI
Cheboygan	Jackson	Sault Ste Marie	
Detroit District	Ludington	Saint Ignace	
Farmington	Muskegon	Southwest MI	

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.



Clerk Craft Report



by Richard
Blake,
Clerk Craft
Director

Clerk Craft Director & Interim President's Report

Interim Presidency - for those of you who are wondering how I've come to serve in the capacity of "interim President", the answer is to be found in Article 10, Section 4.D of the MPWU Constitution: "In the event the President is temporarily unable to perform the duties of his/her office, this responsibility and authority shall rest with the senior member of the Executive Board. The senior member of the Executive Board shall be determined by continuous time spent on the Board as an elected member of the Board". President VanHoogstraten has still been advising me on a continuous basis (there's a very steep learning curve associated with such a position!), and will continue to do so through the Constitutional Convention. I'm pretty amazed at the number of calls I've been getting from all over the state; we're in a time when the challenges we face as a Union are virtually unprecedented. Due to the seriousness of these challenges, the need for us to work together as an organization has never been greater. We simply cannot confront these threats to our jobs and to our national agreement if we remain divided over personalities or turf wars.

I should also inform the membership that there will be times when I'm simply unable to attend every possible function which the MPWU President should attend, or personally handle every situation which has been brought to my attention, due to the issue of lost time. The Michigan Postal Workers Union has been fortunate in that for many years, we've had a President who was retired from the USPS and thus incurred no "lost time" expenses. While this has saved MPWU tens of thousands of dollars over the years, it has also led us to a situation where our current budget was designed based upon our good fortune of not having to pay a President many thousands of dollars in lost time every year. I've already come to the realization that a Michigan Postal Workers Union President could easily need anywhere from 40 to 60 hours **per month** of lost time (President Hartshorn often used that much), and those funds have simply not been budgeted for 2009 or 2010. In the upcoming Constitutional Convention, we're hoping to make some changes designed to provide MPWU with a greater degree of financial stability than what we've had over the past few years, due in large part to uncertainty over the amount of affiliation dues each Local will pay. In the meantime, working with President VanHoogstraten and Secretary-Treasurer Darren Joyce, we'll be walking a fine line between financial responsibility and our obligation to the

membership, and I would ask that the members please bear with us during this period of adjustment.

District Meeting scheduled - at this time we've finalized the arrangements for the upcoming District Meeting to be held in Grand Rapids on February 19th and 20th. The meeting will feature an "open session" on Friday featuring our Clerk Craft National Business Agents; Saturday will feature a beginning and advanced Steward training class, a class on Maintenance Craft staffing and other issues, a class on Motor Vehicle Service craft issues, and classes on reversions and abolishments and Article 12 issues. We were fortunate to be able to negotiate a reasonable deal from the Grand Rapids Hilton on such short notice, and to secure the participation of our National Business Agents on such short notice as well. It's **extremely** critical that all members who wish to attend the meeting pre-register as early as possible, so that we'll have something resembling an accurate head count going into the meeting. I'd like to offer my personal thanks to Amy Puhalski, Tom Lothamer, Therese Cowan, Mike

Long, and the officers of the Western Michigan Area Local for all of their hard work putting together this meeting on extremely short notice.

Committee of Seven Presidents - during the upcoming District Meeting in Grand Rapids, we're planning to hold a meeting of the "Committee of Seven Presidents", the advisory group which was created to afford Local Presidents the opportunity to have input into MPWU matters during times other than our Constitutional Conventions. We're expecting to see some changes to the MPWU Constitution proposed at the Constitutional Convention, and we're hoping that the majority of Local Presidents will be able to reach some degree of consensus on many of these issues **before** the Convention itself, so that the Constitution Committee won't have to be in session almost constantly during the Convention. Matters related to per-capita payments, the composition of the MPWU Executive Board, and the duties of various MPWU Officers will no doubt be discussed at this meeting.

Article 1 craziness — many of you are aware that it appears that the Postal

Service has, for all intents and purposes, "deleted" Article 1 Section 6 from the National Agreement, given the truly mind-boggling amounts of violations we're seeing — and this is **not** confined to the small Associate Offices, either. On October 23rd, APWU national headquarters filed a dispute regarding this issue; if you have filed, or will be filing, a grievance in your office charging management with shifting work from the bargaining unit to management, such grievances will have to be held in abeyance at Step 2 pending the outcome of that national dispute. On October 19th, President Burrus also filed a class action grievance at Step 1 on the same issue; however, that grievance was specifically intended to be applicable **only** to those post offices where no Steward has been certified, and that should exclude all post offices in Michigan, since any office which is not affiliated with a Local Union — what are referred to as "members-at-large" offices — all have Stewards certified to represent them, namely, their respective MPWU Area Director.

In Solidarity.

What Is APWU POWER?

by Karen Hodges
MPWU POWER Chairperson

March is Women's history month and with that we will be sending out ribbons to the local presidents and these are to be worn the whole month.

JUST WHAT IS APWU POWER?

APWU POWER (Post Office Women for Equal Rights) is the women's committee within the American Postal Workers Union. It unites women, with their special concerns, yet works within the framework of the national APWU organization.

WHEN WAS IT FOUNDED?

POWER was founded in St. Louis, Missouri on April 28, 1979. The APWU National Constitution was amended to include POWER at the American Postal Workers Union's National Convention in Detroit, Michigan in August of 1980.

WHY IS APWU POWER NECESSARY?

In the United States, women make up nearly 50 percent of the workforce. In the Postal Service, they constitute approximately 48 percent of the workforce. The same percentage describes the membership in the American Postal Workers Union. Paralleling the women's movement in our country, the women of the APWU recognized that their involvement and active participation had not kept pace with their membership. In the late 1970's a women's

movement in the APWU developed, designed to raise consciousness among the rank and file women of the union. Out of the movement came POWER.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The following is the Statement of Purpose adopted at the founding conference of POWER:

- To establish an APWU national Women's committee, to be incorporated within the structure of one of the present APWU national departments.

- To establish APWU local and state women's committees.

- To establish a viable communications network for APWU women throughout the country to exchange ideas, issues, problems and solutions; and to initiate and support educational programs.

- To encourage the involvement and participation of all women in the APWU.

- To organize the unorganized workers in our workplace.

- To promote affirmative action programs in the APWU; to assist women in achieving leadership roles with the ultimate goal of equalizing participation in leadership positions.

- To join and become fully involved in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

- To enhance harmony within the realm of the National APWU Executive Board.

- To work in cooperation with other

groups and individuals where possible and appropriate to promote women's rights and advance the labor movement.

We espouse "a woman's place is in her union," and will constantly endeavor to make the above quotation a reality.

HOW IS APWU POWER STRUCTURED?

POWER committees exist on four levels - local, state, regional and national. A National Steering Committee consisting of one coordinator from each of the five regions assists in local, state and regional committee operations and communications.

HOW DO I JOIN APWU POWER?

If you are a female member of APWU, you are automatically a member of POWER.

HOW DO WE FORM A LOCAL POWER COMMITTEE?

If you're interested in forming a local POWER committee, first contact your local union president for assistance. Then contact your regional POWER coordinator, who will provide further assistance and material.

WHERE DO APWU POWER COMMITTEES OBTAIN FUNDS?

Your local may assist your POWER committee, as it does any other APWU committee. In addition, funds can be

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by John
Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Veteran's Report

— Hooahmail —

The Army's HooahMail program, now makes it possible, for friends and family members to put a paper letter and photograph into the hands of their loved ones in Afghanistan, faster than you think. The one-year pilot program was scheduled to begin Dec. 1, and makes use of the Internet combined with physical mail delivery to create a hybrid mail system that can get letters into the hands of Soldiers in remote locations much faster than regular mail delivery alone. Family members that want to send a letter and a photograph to a Soldier in Afghanistan, will be able to log into the program's website at www.hooahmail.us to type in their message and delivery information. The HooahMail program is free for family members and friends, and is available **only for Soldiers in Afghanistan**. Although I haven't yet tried the program, if you, or if you know of someone who does, please let me know if, and how it works. Thanks!!!

VETERANS' SHIELDED FROM HCR

The national health care reform bill passed by the House last month and to be debated by the Senate, will pose no threat to current health care benefits provided to military families, retirees or veterans. Steve Robertson, legislative director for the American Legion, said he has assur-

ances from the armed services committees, veterans' affairs committees and congressional leaders including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that health care reform will not impact TRICARE programs or VA health care. The House-passed Affordable Health Care for America Act (HR 3962) states in Section 311 that "nothing" in the bill "shall be construed as affecting" authorities used by the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide TRICARE programs or VA health care benefits.

TATTOO 2010

The Air Force Materiel Command Freedom's Call Tattoo (a Tattoo in the Military is a signal on a drum or bugle to gain military personnel's attention) will be held at Wright Patterson AFB on Friday, June 25, 2010. Their expecting another record turnout, possibly in excess of 75,000 people, who will hopefully enjoy aerial and stage events, music, technology and fireworks. The Tattoo theme for 2010 will commemorate veterans from the Korean War. Part of the tribute will include music from the era, courtesy of the base's own U.S. Air Force Band of Flight. For more information, visit the Freedom's Call Tattoo 2010 webpage. The event is free to the public. They also have a great Air Museum there at Wright Patterson.

FREE THEME PARK ADMISSION
"Here's to the Heroes," a program

sponsored by Anheuser-Busch, provides free admission in 2010 for any active duty, active reserve, National Guardsman or ready reserve service members, representing any of the five branches of service, and allows that service member to bring along, up to three of his or her direct dependents. All the eligible service member needs to do is register online at www.herosalute.com or in the entrance plaza of a participating park, and show a Department of Defense (DoD) photo identification. Each pass is valid for a one-day admission per person per year to five of Anheuser-Busch's seven theme park brands.

LADY SUBMARINERS

Yes, you read that right. The Navy is preparing to send official notification to Congress to end the ban of not allowing female sailors to serve aboard submarines. It's a controversial issue for sailors and their wives, some of whom believe the cramped quarters of a submarine may possibly lead to fraternization or sexual harassment. According to some Admirals, they have been working on the issue for several years, and the Navy has been pushing the initiative. If and when the Navy approves the plan, the Pentagon must notify Congress of its intent and then wait 30 days before implementation of the program. To stop the proposal, Congress must pass legislation for that purpose. You could possibly see female sailors from The Naval Academy's Class

of 2010 or The Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps on subs by late 2011. They would most likely be junior officers among four crews assigned to 2 Ohio-class submarines. The Navy Times did an on-line survey back in October and came up with 61% of respondents were opposed to the proposal while 31% were in favor of it.

MEDAL OF HONOR

Retired Army Col. Robert L. Howard, a Medal of Honor recipient for combat action in Vietnam in 1968, died Dec. 23, 2009, in Waco, Texas. The 70-year-old Howard died in a hospice in Waco, according to a report in the San Antonio Express News. Howard had been suffering from pancreatic cancer. Howard began his Army career as an enlisted man. He was a sergeant first class assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group in December 1968 when his unit came under heavy enemy fire while on a mission to rescue a missing U.S. Soldier. He was wounded, and unable to walk. His own weapon was destroyed by a grenade blast, according to his Medal of Honor citation, but seeing his platoon leader wounded and exposed to fire, he crawled forward, under fire, to pull the lieutenant back. Howard continued to drag the officer back to the rest of the platoon, which he rallied for an organized defense. He crawled from position to position, rendering first aid to the wounded and directed fire on the surrounding enemy force that was estimated to include two companies. For more than three hours, according to the citation, his platoon, aided by air support, turned away enemy attacks until it was possible for helicopters to extract the Soldiers. He was the last man to board the aircraft. Howard was born on July 11, 1939 in Opelika, Ala. He entered the Army in 1956, at only 17, and retired as a colonel in 1992. He was wounded 14 times during a total of 54 months of combat duty in Vietnam and was awarded eight Purple Hearts, according to his obituary. Howard was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, though specific details were not announced. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

What Is APWU POWER?

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raised by various means, such as: dinners, bus rides, sales of items, (bumper stickers, buttons, t-shirts, etc.), garage and yard sales and raffles. Ideas on profitable fundraising activities can be obtained through your POWER coordinator.

HOW DO WE PLAN MEETINGS?

First, set a convenient meeting place, time and date. Remember, many members have family and union responsibilities; make arrangements for child care.

Provide a sign-in sheet at the meeting. Let members introduce themselves. Circulate a questionnaire that will elicit insight into members' interests. Plan educational programs that encourage member participation, based on results of the questionnaires. Display POWER posters, literatures and related materials. Invite interesting speakers.

JOIN!

The POWER Steering committee — and all the members of POWER —

invite you to join them in our rewarding and productive action-oriented program. Together we can help improve the working climate not only for APWU member but for all working people.

HOW DO I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

To obtain additional information contact the POWER coordinator in your region.

The POWER coordinator for the Central Region is:

Carolyn Watson, Chicago Area
Home phone number (708) 478-1539
Cell number (708) 307-0655

Or you can contact me:

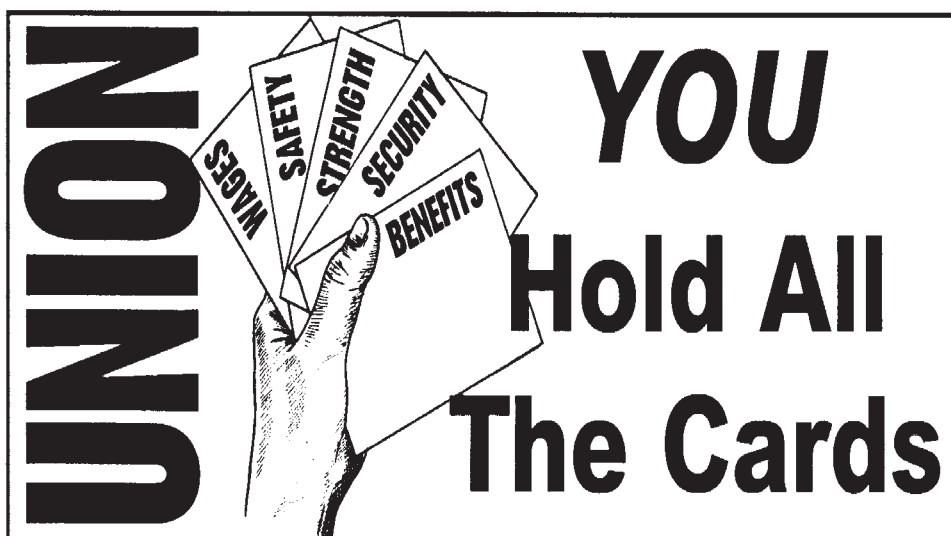
Karen Hodges, MPWU POWER
Chairperson
Work 616 776-1542 Tour one
(2300-0750)
Cell 616 745-6234

There will be a Central Region POWER Conference sometime this late spring; early summer. I will have more information at a later date as to when and where it will be held.

In solidarity.

KOREAN WAR VETERANS

South Korean President, Lee Myung-Bak, will send a letter of appreciation to 100,000 foreign Korea War veterans, in 2010, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. The letter will be sent to Korean War veterans' associations of the 21 participating nations. The government is also preparing to hold war anniversary events in 20 nations. Until Next Time.



2010 MICHIGAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION 22nd Biennial Constitutional, Retiree And Auxiliary Convention

Friday, April 15-17, 2010
Ramada Lansing Hotel And Conference Center
Lansing, Michigan

CONVENTION CALL

The 22nd Biennial Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union will convene on April 15, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Ramada Lansing Hotel and Conference Center in Lansing, Michigan and will adjourn at the conclusion of business on April 17, 2010.

Costs:

Hotel: \$83.00 (plus 15% taxes (total price includes self-parking))

Registration: \$75.00 per delegate
⇒ Resolutions need to be submitted to and received by Executive Secretary Harold Juhl by March 15, 2010. Resolutions need to be signed by both the President and Secretary of the local submitting (hard copy) along with a copy on digital media (e.g. Flash Drive or e-mail). A template for resolutions is available on the website.

⇒ A list of all delegates attending the convention need to be submitted by March 15, 2010. (via the website)

Article 7 of the MPWU Constitution states: "Time of the Convention and Election of Officers"

Section 1: The Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, shall convene the same year as the National Convention of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, on any Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in April or May. In any week except that which precedes Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mothers Day, or Memorial Day.

Section 2: It shall be the sole responsibility of the State Union to plan and expedite the proceedings of the Convention, including suitable and ample accommodations for delegates. It shall further be the responsibility of the State President to appoint two (2) members of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, and the President of the State Convention Committee to work with any Local who represents the Convention location as voted under Article 7, Section 5. The financial responsibility of the State Convention shall be solely that of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.

Section 3: The Convention shall convene at 9:30 a.m. on the first day and recess at 11:30 a.m., immediately after the committee assignments and reconvene at 3:00 p.m. The Constitution Committee shall meet the day prior to the first day of the MPWU Constitution Convention. This time is to be utilized for official use by the committees. The Convention shall

remain in session until completed.

Section 4: Nominators for, all candidates for Executive Board positions shall be the last order of business, Friday of the Convention. No candidate shall be allowed to run for more than one (1) office. Any nominee must accept or decline a nomination for office prior to the closing of nominations. Convention Delegates as well as the Convention City shall be the first order of business on Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. shall be reserved exclusively for purpose of caucus.

Section 5: The election of Officers will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday of the Convention. A President, Secretary Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Director of Education, Human Relations/Compensation Director, Legislative Director, Editor, (3) Craft Directors, Area directors, Convention Delegates, plus Convention City, will

be elected at this time, by secret ballot.

Section 6: [A] The three (3) Craft Directors shall be elected by secret ballot in accordance with Section 5 above, but Craft Directors shall be elected from delegates from their Craft only. [B] Area Directors shall be elected by secret ballot from delegates, present from their Area only. If a Craft or Area Director is not represented by at least one delegate to the Convention, or if there are no candidates from a specific Craft or Area, for the position of Craft or area Director, then the President shall appoint a member of that Craft or Area to that position, with the advise and consent of a majority of the Executive Board. [C] If after three (3) ballots have been cast, a tie exists, a toss of a coin will break the tie.

Section 7: All terms of office shall be from the date of the certification by Election Committee, until the conclu-

sions of the elections, at the next scheduled MPWU State Convention.

Section 8: Any retired member, who is paying full dues to their Local Union, may hold office in this Union. Any retired member who retires from State Office, can at the discretion of the Present, be used in an advisory capacity.

In addition, **Article 9 (Representation), Section 1**, states: Each Local Union or Area local affiliated with the MPWU shall be entitled to representation in the State Convention on the following basis: All locals shall receive one delegate for each twenty (20) members or any portion thereof. To be computed on the basis of the previous twenty-four (24) month's average paid membership. In addition, no Local may pay more than three (3) months back dues at one time, prior to the State Convention.

A Stunning Announcement:

OIG Says USPS Overpaid Federal Government \$75 Billion

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has issued a stunning announcement:

The USPS has been overcharged \$75 billion in contributions to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pension fund.

After an in-depth investigation, the OIG has concluded that an inequitable system for computing the Postal Service's CSRS pension responsibility has caused the dramatic overpayment. The OIG study was conducted in conjunction with the Hay Group, a well-known economic consulting firm.

The funding error follows two previous findings that the Postal Service had been required to over fund its pension obligations. In 2002 it was determined that the Postal Service was on track to over fund CSRS by \$78 billion, and in 2003 the USPS was overcharged \$27 billion for CSRS military service credits. The earlier overpayments were corrected by legislation adopted in 2003 and 2006, respectively.

The newest over funding debacle, if corrected, would more than offset the Postal Service's deficit from Fiscal Year 2009 and the expected shortfalls in FY 2010 and 2011. The doomsday predictors of the imminent demise of the Postal Service must now find a new rationale for their efforts to dismantle postal services.

The cry for a new business model and legislative relief ring hollow when USPS financial difficulties could be fully resolved by returning to the Postal Service the overpayments made to date. Realigning the network, reducing employee compensation and benefits, and transferring the cost of universal service to individual mailers can now be exposed for the fraudulent exercises they represent. Instead, we can engage in a meaningful dialogue about the future of hard-copy communication and the role of postal services in the 21st century — without the looming threat of bankruptcy.

This report is good news for a beleaguered government service. USPS

service standards and productivity have remained at high levels; the economy is recovering, and the black cloud of fiscal insolvency could be removed. All parties in the postal community who wish to be of assistance must join in an effort to correct the inequity and relieve the Postal Service of the unjustified funding requirement.

In the meantime, we can take a deep breath and stop the momentum for another round of harmful postal "reform." And after the attrition of 115,000 APWU-represented positions since 2002, we would appreciate a public recognition that our members have contributed their share.

— William Burrus, President





by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

Retiree Involvement

Clarification

Clarification: In my previous "R.I." column I stated; ". . .if there is no Social Security 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 most, if not all of us." Further clarification of that statement is necessary, as it applies ONLY to those seniors who were eligible Social Security and Medicare beneficiaries prior to 1-1-10 and are adversely affected due to there being no S.S. COLA increase in their 2010 S.S. benefit.

For those CSRS and FERS retirees who become Medicare eligible beginning 1-1-10, the monthly premium will be \$110.50 per month. For CSRS retirees who were Medicare eligible prior to 1-1-10, but are NOT S.S. eligible, the monthly premium will be \$110.50. That's a hefty increase of \$14.10 per month.

Nickel & Dimed! Because there was no COLA increase for Social Security(S.S.) recipients who were enrolled in Medicare prior to 1-1-10, the monthly Medicare premiums remain at the 2009 rate of \$96.40 for 2010. . . OR, DO THEY?! Did you look carefully at your recent statement from the Social Security Administration (SSA); the monthly amount before deductions, the deduction for Medicare, and the net amount? My S.S. statement shows I'm being deducted **\$96.50!** By my math that's an INCREASE of ten cents. . . MY DIME!

A call to the SSA, was referred to my local SSA agent who attempted to explain that this was a "rounding" of .10 cents. When pointing out that even the 2010 "Medicare & You" handbook shows the monthly premium would be \$96.40. The agent weakly explained that the rounding must have been done after the handbook was printed. Admittedly being no math whiz, I thought the rounding principle was that up to .49 cents is rounded down, and .50 cents and over rounded up to the next whole dollar. Whatever the case; at least some Medicare recipients are being chiseled out of a dime . . .OUR dime. . .\$1.20 per year! Small potatoes individually, but a chunk of change collectively. I've contacted the district offices of Congressman Bart Stupak (D), and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D) for a comprehensive explanation and will report their responses.

\$250. Tax Credit: (Source: NARFE) "If you are a CSRS retire who is NOT eligible to receive Social Security, you

can apply for the 2009 economic recovery payment when you file your 2009 taxes. You can only receive the \$250. payment one way. If you got it through Social Security, you cannot claim it on your taxes. If you did not get a payment through S.S. because you are a CSRS retiree not eligible to receive S.S. monthly payments, you should claim the credit on your 2009 taxes. For those eligible to claim the \$250. tax credit, the form needed will be Schedule M. IRS Publication 721 "Tax Guide to U.S. Civil Service Retirement Benefits" for tax year 2009 will provide specific instructions on how you can claim your \$250. credit."

Read The Fine Print! Did you read your 2010 OPM "Notice Of Annuity Adjustment"? Did you see that your federal income tax withholding actually DECREASED a significant amount? Again, from NARFE sources: "Many federal retirees have seen federal tax withholding decrease in their January 1, 2010, annuity payment. OPM informed NARFE that it received the new tax withholding tables from the IRS for 2010 and that it applied them to the annuity payments using its usual processes." "OPM officials are continuing to research the changes and the reason why the withholding is lower for 2010 and will provide (NARFE) an answer when they get one." Stay tuned!

While on the subject of reading the fine print on S.S. and OPM notices; check the back of your OPM notice on the bottom right box; "Health Benefits Coverage for Your Surviving Spouse" — In the event of your death, your spouse will have health benefits coverage ONLY if you:

- Elect survivor benefits for your spouse, AND
- Have family health benefits coverage when you die.

There are no exceptions to these two requirements."

34 Day Month . . . Between paydays, that is! With 31 days in the month of December, and with New Years Day landing on a Friday this year, direct deposit annuity payments for January 1, 2010 weren't available in financial institutions until Monday, January 4th. This may seem like a minor irritation for some, but for many postal/federal retirees who survive on single, or small annuity incomes, a 34-day pay span can make it pretty difficult to make ends meet, especially when considering having just gone through the usually higher expenses of the Christmas season. Similar delayed annuity payments are not uncommon, depending on the day of the week the 1st of the month occurs, and where a holiday lands.

That's up to 3 days OUR money is not

available to us. I don't know if the U.S. Treasury derives interest or dividends on those monies while it's in limbo for those 3 days. All I know is that while retirees stretch their resources and dine on macaroni and cheese through the holiday weekend, we didn't have our money at our disposal. If we are late making a payment, like on our taxes, there's a penalty to pay. Maybe CSRS/FERS retirees should be paid interest for those 3 days even if only amounts to pennies. They're OUR pennies! One would expect that with all the available technology, annuity direct deposits could be posted to your account on the 1st day of the month regardless of the day of the week it falls on. But, take heart! Retiree's favorite month, February, only has 28 days between paydays . . . except in leap years.

NARFE Dilemma! I've been a dues-paying member of the National Active & Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) for over 17 years, and currently serve as legislative chair for the Alpena, MI, Thunder Bay Chapter #1487. I also belong to the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA). I belong to these retiree service organizations as a matter of self-preservation as they represent my best interests as a retired CSRS postal worker. Like religions, there are differences in the methods and political philosophies of each organization while advocating many of the same goals. HOWEVER, I'm first an APWU Retirees' Dept. State Retiree Chapter officer and a Union Man!

To make it crystal clear; the APWU Retirees' Dept. is not in competition with NARFE, but works in concert with NARFE and ARA on issues of mutual best interest for our members. NARFE is an excellent resource for information vital to retired federal/postal retirees as evidenced in items quoted above. NARFE exerts considerable influence on our legislative issues on Capitol Hill. The Jan., 2010 issue of the NARFE magazine announced the 31st NARFE National Convention will be located in Grand Rapids, MI, Aug. 29 - Sept. 3, 2010. What disappoints me to the very core of my Union being is that the NARFE National Convention will be held at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and DeVos Place convention center. DeVos! VanAndel! "Scamway"! The very antithesis of organized labor in the otherwise Great State of Michigan!

The ultra-conservative DeVos family is well known to be in the forefront of attempts to propose legislation to remake Michigan as a "Right-To-Shirk" state, and a leading financial backer of Union-busting efforts. DeVos, Amway, VanAndel represent the epitome of anti-labor, anti-worker, anti-Union advocates,

and so far to the 'Right' they have to have sunshine piped to them! Perhaps I naively believed someone in NARFE leadership would have recognized this when considering convention sites, but I also can understand why this might not be high on the agenda when considering the backgrounds of NARFE's executive leadership.

While NARFE's non-partisan philosophies, and membership makeup of all levels of federal/postal service; management and bargaining unit, is well understood; it should likewise be understood that a significant percentage of NARFE's dues-paying members are retired APWU, NALC, NPMHU, NL-RCA, AFGE, NTU, and other federal agency retired Union members! I'm also more than aware of the long-standing rap, and an excuse many bargaining unit retirees cite for refusing to join NARFE, that elected NARFE officers at most levels is largely dominated by management and executive types. Frankly, that's never bothered me as long as we are working toward achieving mutual goals, especially in the legislative arena.

But, in this instance we depart ways, and my position may not be well received in some quarters of NARFE. So be it! This is a matter of Union principle as it should be with any NARFE member who has a shred of union-mindedness. This is not meant to offend anyone as much as I'm offended that Michigan is hosting the NARFE National Convention at a place where NARFE member's dues dollars will be going to patronize the right-wing, anti-labor DeVos-Amway facilities. At the risk of being branded persona non grata either by my NARFE Chapter, or any other level of NARFE, I'm serving notice that I will actively oppose spending one Chapter dime to either send a delegate, place an ad in the convention book, or otherwise financially support the 2010 NARFE National Convention.

The only way I would even remotely consider attending would be to picket the place! I fully intend to convey these sentiments to the NARFE leadership that; NARFE's selection of the DeVos-Amway location to conduct their convention, is an insult to all postal/federal labor, particularly here in Michigan. It's time for a principles check, and a matter of respect for those Union principles. "If we don't stand for something, we'll fall for anything!"

(Un)Health(y) Care Legislation: At this writing in mid-Jan., there's deep concerns over provisions in the Senate version of the Health Care legislation that would severely tax federal employee Blue Cross/Blue Shield Standard (FEHBP) health insurance

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2010 MICHIGAN STATE RETIREE CHAPTER 5th Biennial Constitutional Convention

Friday, April 16, 2010

Ramada Lansing Hotel And Conference Center Lansing, Michigan

MPWU STATE RETIREE CHAPTER CONVENTION CALL

The 4th Biennial Constitutional Convention of the State Retiree Chapter, Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, will convene on Friday, April 16, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Ramada Lansing Hotel and Conference Center in Lansing, Michigan, in conjunction with the 22st Biennial Constitutional Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. If business is not completed by adjournment on Friday, Convention will reconvene on Saturday. Time to be announced.

Registration: Thursday, April 15th, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Friday, April 16th, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Hotel Reservations: \$83. (plus 15% taxes (which includes self parking). Ramada Lansing Hotel and Conference Center; 7501 West Saginaw Highway, Lansing, MI 48917; Phone: (517) 627-3211. Be sure to tell reservations that you are with "Group - PWU" to receive the proper room rate.

Registration Fee: \$75.00**State Retiree Chapter E-Board officer registration fees will be included in expenses. (No registration fee will be charged for one-day commuter retiree delegates.)

Meals: There will be no American Plan. Everyone will be on their own for meals. State Retiree Chapter E-Board officers meal expenses will be included in authorized expenses upon submission of receipts, beginning with Thursday dinner and ending with Sunday breakfast.

Delegates: Article 10, MPWU State Retiree Chapter Constitution states: "The voting strength of member Local Retiree Chapters at Convention shall be one (1) vote for every twenty (20) members, or fraction thereof. Representation shall be based upon the membership of each member Local Retiree Chapter in the year preceding the Convention. Members-At-Large shall be entitled to one (1) vote each. Each MPWU State Retiree Chapter officer holding an elective office shall have a voice and one (1) vote and shall be a delegate to the MPWU State Retiree Chapter Convention." (NOTE: In order to fulfill these provisions, Local Retiree Chapters are requested to bring their Local Chapter dues rebate printouts to the Convention to verify the voting strength of each Local Retiree Chapter. While it may not be necessary, we want to be correct and without question.)

NOMINATION & ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Article 6. "Elections" "All regular elections shall be held in conjunction with the election of officers of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. Officers shall be elected by secret ballot vote. Notice of election shall be advertised in the *Michigan Messenger* at least thirty (30) days preceding the election. Nominations and elections procedures shall be in accordance with the MPWU Constitution. Appeals to the conduct of elections shall be in accordance with the elections appeals procedures of the MPWU Constitution."

ARTICLE 5. OFFICERS.

Section 1. "The elected officers of this State Chapter shall be: President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and up to three (3) Trustees."

Section 2. "To be eligible for office, a member must be in good standing for three (3) months immediately preceding the election, as certified by the Secretary-Treasurer."

Section 3. "To be eligible to vote in an election of officers, a member must be in good standing for the three (3) months immediately preceding the election as certified by the Chapter Secretary-Treasurer."

Nominations for State Retiree Chapter officers will be the last order of business prior to lunch recess on Friday, April 16th. Elections of State Retiree Chapter officers will be conducted at 3:00 p.m., Friday, April 16th. Election results will be announced prior to adjournment on Friday, April 16th.

CREDENTIALS: Credential cards will be issued to MPWU State Retiree Chapter Executive Board officers. Credential cards for Local Retiree Chapter delegates and M.A.L. delegates may be obtained from: Al LaBrecque; 3550 Wilson St.; Spruce, MI 48762, or call 989-736-8173; or e-mail: allab@sisna.com.

Local Retiree Chapter credential cards are to be filled out showing both the name of the delegate and Local Retiree Chapter represented. Credentials must be typed or printed and signed by the Local Retiree Chapter President and Secretary, or Secretary-Treasurer. Green Cards should be furnished to the delegates for exchange with the Credentials Committee in Lansing when registering. Return the Blue Card at once to: MPWU Sec.-Treas., Darren Joyce; P.O. Box 1124; Flint, MI 48501, no later than March 30th!

Resolutions: Resolutions intended to be submitted to the MPWU State Convention for consideration by the MPWU State Convention delegates, must be submitted through a Local Retiree Chapter's parent APWU Local for submission to, and received by MPWU State Exec.-Sec., Harold Juhl, by March 15, 2010. Resolutions intended to be considered by the delegates to the State Retiree Chapter Convention must be submitted to the Trustees no later than 12 Noon, April 16th.

GUEST SPEAKER: Judy Beard, National Retirees Director.

If you have any further questions, concerns, or need more information, please contact State Retiree President Al LaBrecque.

— Clarification —

continued from page 6

ance premiums by a purported rate of 40%. That's totally unacceptable, and vigorously opposed by organized labor. I'm advised that APWU Pres. Burrus has sent a letter opposing the Senate language to every member of the U.S. House. The House version of Health Care legislation does not contain this discriminatory surtax provision, and is acceptable.

"The Senate's proposed tax has been mischaracterized as a tax on "Cadillac plans". That ignores the very real reasons some health plans are expensive. One big reason is that insurance companies take excessive profit, not that they offer too much care." (An excerpt from statements by James P. Hoffa, Jr., General Pres., International Brotherhood of Teamsters). Again, at this writing, there are news reports that Union leaders and the Obama Administration may

have come to some kind of resolution on this deeply disturbing issue. By the time you read this we'll know whether, or not, if we'll be nickel and dimed again. The honeymoon is over! It's time we remind President Obama and Members of Congress of just who put them where they are and why, because the chickens WILL come home to roost! I will be contacting my Congressman and Senators, and if you are affected or concerned, I suggest you do the same. Just because we're retired, we're never out of the arena!

Congratulations! Fireproof and out of the crosshairs! MPWU Area 10 Dir., and Alpena, MI APWU Local President, **Michael Wekwert**, retired. Mike will continue to represent MPWU Area 10 members as State Union Area 10 Director. Enjoy, Brother. You served your time in Hell!

Be Strong!



CORPORATE HACK-IN-THE-BOX

Trying To Understand What Is 'Withholding'

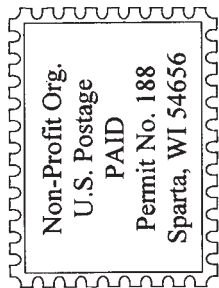
by William LaSalle
 APWU Eastern Region
 Maintenance NBA
 <williamlasalle@comcast.net>

Stewards' efforts would be better directed toward protecting the work represented by the withheld Custodial duty assignments, rather than the withholding itself. With the waiver of exam 916, all currently excessed craft employees are considered qualified for the vacant Custodial duty assignments. Most of the vacancies are covered by multiple excessing events. The USPS withholds in terms of a radius from the facility experiencing the excessing (withhold all vacant level 4 and below Maintenance Craft duty assignments within a 250 miles radius of the Podunk facility). With many excessing events currently occurring simultaneously, most Custodial vacancies are under overlapping concentric circles of withholding (think layers of an onion). Your union insists that this withholding take place as a protection for those excessed members. To understand why withholding is so

important, simply try to place yourself in the shoes of a displaced employee. Imagine waking up tomorrow to learn that the job you have held for 22 years is gone and your new assignment is 250 miles away. In my situation, I'm 51 years old, my wife is a Philadelphia schoolteacher, I own my home in Philadelphia, both our elderly parents live in Philadelphia, my children and grandchildren live here. What would I do if my job at the Philadelphia BMC was suddenly my job in Cleveland, Ohio? That withheld Custodial duty assignment in Lancaster, PA or Red Bank, NJ could be the difference between my continuing my employment with the USPS or not. It is the difference between the inconvenient and the impossible. And believe me, there are not many job opportunities in Philly for an unemployed, middle age man with my resume. And certainly none like my USPS job. This is exactly the situation many APWU members are facing. Even with withheld duty assignments, there remains an obligation on the Postal Service to complete the work required by the MS-47 staffing study. That is where our Maintenance stewards should concen-

trate their efforts. The PS form 4852 will show how many work hours are required to keep your facility clean. TACS reports will show how many Custodial work hours are being utilized. eMARS reports will show exactly what routes are bypassed or incomplete. My suggestion to our stewards is read the text of the hand-

book MS-47 (it only a couple of pages long, most the book's pages are sample worksheets). Read Arbitrator Das' Iron Mountain Award (that's the Line 'J' Award). Read Gamser. Understand the Service's obligation to clean using the minimum frequencies contained in the Handbook. File good, well documented grievances when violations are found.



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

Area 7, 8, & 9 District Meeting

When: February 19 & 20, 2010
Where: Grand Rapids Airport Hilton & Conference Center
 4747 28th Street SE
 Grand Rapids, MI 49512

Costs: Hotel: \$65.00 (per night, plus applicable taxes)
Registration: \$75.00

ITINERARY:

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2010:

1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. General Session

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2010

8:30 a.m. – Noon Basic Stewards Training
 Reversions/Abolishments – transitioning to Article 12
 Maintenance Issues
 MVS Issues

Noon – 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Advanced Stewards Training
 Maintenance Issues (Continued)
 MVS Issues (Continued)
 Article 12 (Continued)

Please check the MPWU website for information and to register for this event.