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President's Report



by John Marcotte, President

Accountability

Accountability: the quality or state of being **accountable**; *especially:* an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to **account** for one's actions <public officials lacking *accountability*>

As we all know there has been a lack of accountability at the USPS in its dealings with its employees for over a decade. Postal supervisors and managers who violate postal rules and manuals in their dealings with employees do so with impunity. USPS Labor Relations invents fanciful excuses for capricious, boorish and abusive behavior, rather than righting the wrong at the lowest step. They turn a blind eye to clear language in handbooks, manuals and our bargaining agreement. If justice is obtained eventually, either well on in the grievance procedure or at arbitration, the offending supervisor is never officially reprimanded or disciplined. It has progressed to the point that supervisors who follow postal instructions and the bargaining agreement are considered soft and "not team players."

This total lack of accountability was once reserved for dealings with postal employees only. Previously postal managers did follow the rules when they dealt with American public. They would deal with Congress, The Board of Governors and the Postal Rate Commission honestly and with respect. The USPS management rightfully considered itself public servants completely answerable to the communities they serve.

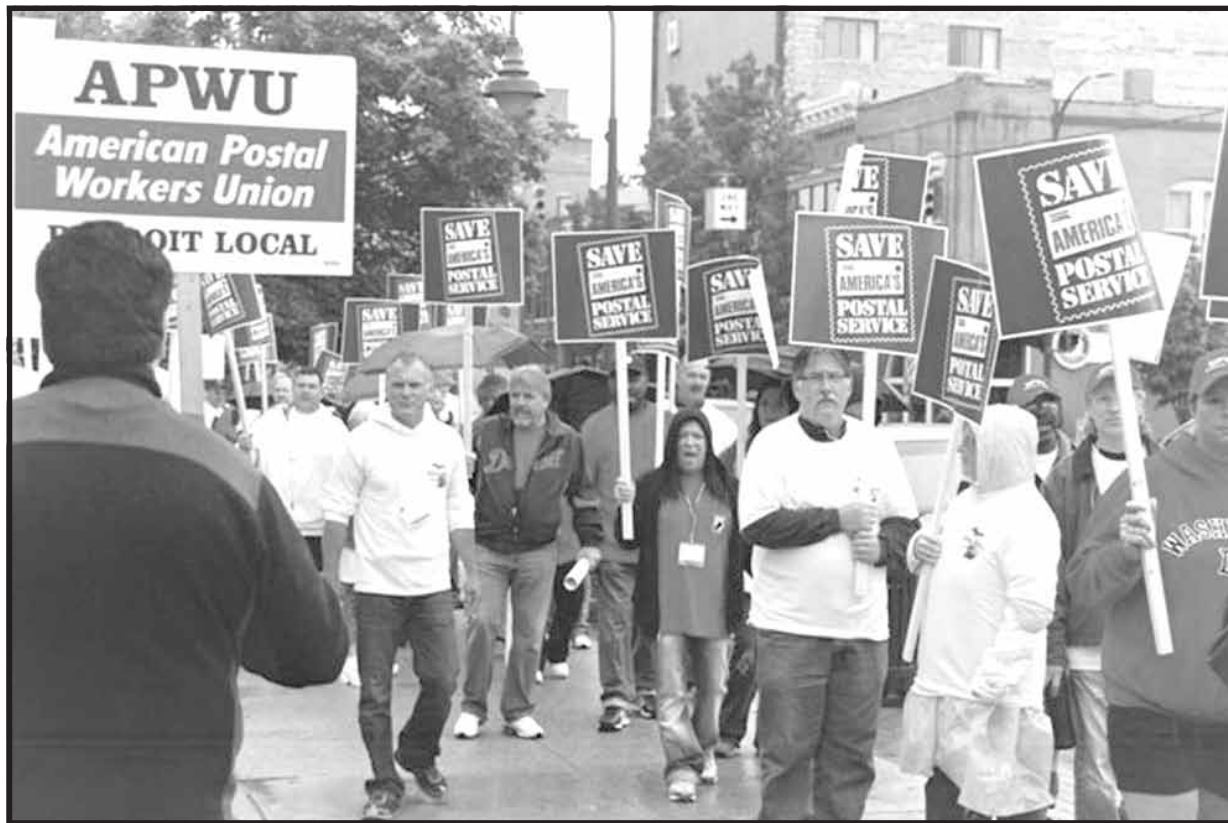
Those days of the USPS dealing honestly and fairly with the American people are long gone. The PMG and his gang from L'Enfant Plaza were loud vocal **supporters** of the Postal Accountability and Enforcement Act of 2006. The annual 5 billion dollars in prefunding of employees healthcare that surely would bankrupt the Postal Service didn't concern them a bit. They were focused on the huge increase in their pay, benefits and

Now this "screw you" attitude has filtered down to the district level where temporarily assigned potentes (district managers and their many titled minions) hold town hall meetings and assure the public that service will remain the same, that moving mail processing will save money for the Postal Service and that access to the mailing network will be the same for business mailers. All lies. In the few locations where

round hole at any expense. We have employees being paid to ride in government vehicles or hired buses to work at far away sites resulting in shipping both the mail and employees long distances. Overtime is rampant at gaining facilities while employees sit idle at losing facilities. Numbers are manipulated; trucks are late arriving, delaying the mail, mail is sent out to the small offices without being worked in an attempt to hide increased processing costs and delayed mail.

The above is the definition of *no accountability*. The question is why we allow it to happen? We are still customers of the Postal Service as are our families and friends. It is time to rise up and force Congress to act on postal reform. Jerk control from the self interested bureaucrats bent on privatizing the Postal Service and restore a basic function of government to its foundation.

There is no other option. The "bailout" will not be the expense of preserving the Postal Service, it will be in the costs all



The picket in downtown Traverse City was a high point of the Convention.

special retirement funds that allowed them to well exceed the cap on compensation for government employees. For 5 years they sat quietly and ensured a totally unnecessary financial crisis of immense proportions was fully in place before they even addressed the ridiculous prefunding of employee healthcare. While he rolls out massive cuts to service and post office closures, the PMG himself never mentions that he testified before Congress that the USPS could afford the pre-funding of health care without affecting mail delivery to the American people.

consolidation has happened, mail has been delayed, actual costs have gone up, massive revenue losses have occurred from business leaving for other delivery options and the fanciful savings projections have never materialized.

In the face of undisputed hard data showing the increase in costs caused by consolidation, postal management is not looking to return mail operations to the previous more efficient network sites. Instead, they engage in the old governmental standby of pounding the square peg into the

us will pay if the USPS is allowed to privatize. Don't believe me? Ship a package 2-3 day delivery to a relative across the country. Price USPS, UPS and Fed EX. Now take that large difference in postage and multiply the amount the others overcharge by every package, letter and article you send *and receive* in a year. This is a massive tax on the American people to support stockholders and executives at private corporations. A bailout exactly like the Wall Street bailout, and it is all unnecessary. We have the power to stop it - if we will only act.



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by Michael A. Long,
Executive Secretary

Executive Secretary's Report

It Isn't New . . . It Just Has A New Name

Lead Clerk Positions are now all anyone is talking about. Can this person do this? Can the person who holds this position do that? We now have four pages, and more, coming out with Questions and Answers regarding this position. Wake up people. It isn't new. We have had Lead positions before. We have Group Leader positions in Maintenance (Level 5 Custodians). There are Lead/Group Leader positions in the Mail Handler craft (while rarely used, they do exist). They've have Lead Sales and Service Clerks (or Associates as we now call them) in the Clerk Craft for years. If you look at the positions, there isn't much difference in the actual duties.

Yes, some things have changed, but it isn't like the world is going to open up and everything we know will fall into something called the Lead Clerk position. One thing that is of the utmost importance, Lead Clerks are NOT supervisors. They are craft employees. They can't issue discipline. I personally think of a Lead Clerk as a go-between. Unfortunately, in my office, management chose to do away with the General Clerk positions and repost them as Lead Clerk. I wonder who is going to do all the work that the General Clerk did. Think about it for a second, neither of them has anything to do with the other. While some duties may overlap (doesn't every job have one or two features that overlap another), the two are vastly different. My personal thought will be, wait long enough, and you will either see history repeat itself (as I have stated in the past, those who don't learn from it, will repeat it . . . and in the Postal Service, all you need is a stiff wind and it blows out whatever little bit of stuff there is between management's ears, and they forget it ever happened), or overtime will increase to do the job that the General Clerk once did. I can only tell you to keep an eye on who is doing the work. If management thinks for one second that we'll let them do the job that clerks have always done, just because now they don't have anyone to do it – we

say no way because it is a fault of their own making.

A Lead Clerk is just that . . . a Clerk. Out on the floor . . . doing work alongside other clerks. Lead clerks seem more like a trainer, mixed in with someone that can help you (Per APWU, Lead Clerks shall have TACS access, so if you have a problem with your clock rings, you can have him/her go check your rings for you). If you need help in performing your work, you can ask them to help. To get the job, they had to be in the position for a year (either on the Window, in the Plant, etc.) I know that management's attempt is to utilize them as pseudo-204Bs. If you see this happening, make sure to see your steward. They are NOT supervisors. Plain and simple. I have come to think of the Group Leaders (since I am in Maintenance) as a facilitator. They help things get done. I remember when they used to do the assignments for custodians, etc. It isn't rocket science, and let's not make it as such.

I would also like to state that the above is mainly for the clerks in the Plants. In Associate Offices, Lead Clerks are technically like Finance Clerks that we have had for years. They are clerks, but they are accountable for the office (for those that will be in a station with a Postmaster in another office).

I can see some of the confusion and all, but as I stated before . . . It's not new.

New Faces in New Places

As I stated in my last article, I would like to thank each of you for your support you gave me as your Editor of this fine publication. I wish Paul all the luck and I hope you give him the same support that you have shown me. As I embark on this different position, I would like to thank Harold Juhl for all he did as the previous Executive Secretary. It will be difficult to do, but hope to be able to fill his shoes the best as I can. As the Executive Secretary, I am here to assist each of you with whatever you may require to perform your union job better. If I can be of any help, please let me know.

Besides my change in a new position, we have a few new faces on the Board who will be available to assist you. If you are a Member at Large, your first stop is to your Area Director. A list of all Area Directors is available on the website, and on Page 2 of this paper. Area Directors are assigned by Zip Code region of your work office (for example, if you live in 488, but work in 493, you fall under the Area 9 Director, since 493/494 is Area 9). Welcome to the new officers and board members. However, with regret, when we say Hello to someone new, we have to say Goodbye to some.

McCain Is A Pain

After the Senate passed S-1789 which put some restrictions on plant closings and post office closings, Republican Senator John McCain (along with Republican Senators Corker and Coburn) wrote a letter to PMG Donahoe, the key paragraphs of which are reprinted below (thanks to Tucson Area Local President Connie Sadler-Nelson for sending it to the Editor).

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:
Despite the Senate's passage of

S-1789, we believe it is very unlikely that both the House and Senate will come to agreement on legislation that reforms the postal system anytime soon and **strongly encourage you to move forward with the cost-saving changes** you have previously outlined.

The 21st Century Postal Service Act would create many new mandates that would prevent the Postal Service from reducing costs and creating a sustainable business model. Specifically, the legislation would **halt many processing facility and post office closures, prevent the USPS from revising its delivery standards, not allow flexibility in appropriately pricing services and further delay the transition to 5-day delivery.**

As Senators committed to fiscal responsibility and **preventing future taxpayer funded bailouts**, we support your efforts to put the USPS on a sustainable financial path for the future.

(Note: emphasis added by the Editor)

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 | Stevensville |
| Battle Creek | 480-481 | Pontiac | Traverse City |
| Central MI | 498-499 | Roger City | Troy Local |
| Cheboygan | Gaylord | 486-487 | Western MI |
| Detroit District | Jackson | Sault Ste Marie | |
| Farmington | Ludington | Southwest MI | |

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Articles and correspondence to the Editor may be sent to Paul Felton, PO Box 361342, Grosse Pointe, MI 48236. Articles must be signed to be printed (your name may be withheld upon request). Articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.



by Paul Felton, Editor

Editor's Report

The Nightmare

The year is 2013. Congress just passed a law eliminating our No Lay-off clause, slashing our wages, and shutting down massive numbers of plants and post offices. The Republicans gained a comfortable majority in both houses of Congress last November, so it was easy for this legislation to sail through Congress.

It was then signed into law by President Romney.

Management broke off talks with APWU about a retirement buyout – if they can lay us off they don't have to pay us off. And the layoffs don't even have to be by juniority. Eligible employees are rushing to fill out retirement papers before they get laid off – or before Congress changes the retirement system!

Could This Happen?

Could this happen? If the Republicans sweep the elections in November it could absolutely happen. Everything stated above has been proposed by Republicans during recent Congressional debates. And in state after state where Republicans control all branches of government, they have systematically

attacked unions and slashed wages, benefits, and basic rights of government workers. Just ask the public sector unions in Michigan what they've been through these last two years.

The Republican Party has changed. They used to be anti-labor, voting against any measure that would help working people, but without making it a major focus of their activity. After the 2010 elections, Republicans changed focus. They are hell-bent on destroying unions, especially unions that represent government workers, and **this is central to their strategy**. If Republicans gain control over the Senate, House and the Presidency this November, they will be coming after us. Many of the things we take for granted as postal workers will be jeopardized – our job security, our secure retirement, our standard of living.

Our entire membership will have to work hard this summer and fall to prevent this nightmare from becoming reality.

The MPWU Convention

The high point of the MPWU Convention was the May 31 picket in downtown Traverse City. We picketed



Picketing in the rain in Traverse City.

Congressman Camp's office as well as the downtown Post Office, spreading the word about the attacks on our jobs and the public's mail service.

Later that day I accepted the nomination for Editor of the *Michigan Messenger*. Mike Long vacated the position by taking the Executive Secretary

position and Jesus Gonzales took my old position as Legislative Director. I look forward to working with them, with President Marcotte, and the entire Executive Board. Whatever changes I make in the *Michigan Messenger* will be gradual. I look forward to spreading the *Message* of unionism throughout *Michigan* over the next two years.



by Linda Turney, National Business Agent

Turney Talks

Bringing The Bill To The Floor

When you read, you empower yourself. When you write you influence others.

Majority Leader Eric Cantor (Republican from VA) and Darrell Issa (Republican from CA) are working to bring a new proposal to overhaul operations for the U.S. Postal Service to the floor between July 4 and the August recess. Cantor is not promising a vote on Issa's bill. Postal officials have urged the House to act quickly to pass a reform bill, with the agency having already lost some \$6.5 billion this fiscal year. The USPS will default on \$11 billion worth of prepayments for retiree healthcare that is due before the end of September. The USPS also says they are moving forward with plans to consolidate mail processing centers. Even though the Senate passed S-1789, a bipartisan reform bill last April, the House has **not** moved the Issa/Ross bill from the House and Oversight Committee to the floor. Even though

Cantor states they will be working to send this draconian legislation to the floor, I personally think not. This legislation causes trouble for rural Republicans such as Adrian Smith from Nebraska. Rural postal customers are complaining about these changes to the Postal Service. Republicans just don't have the votes to pass it. If they did have the votes, it would have to be reconciled with the Senate bill.

The House proposal would allow the USPS to move more swiftly to end Saturday delivery and would empower a task force to consolidate Post Offices. The Senate bill voted to keep Saturday delivery for at least two years and allow the USPS to use a retirement fund overpayment for a buyout. It would also relieve some pressure from the health care pre-payments.

On June 4, 2012, I spoke with Congressman Schakowsky and she said the House would be lucky to get something similar to the Senate version that passed.

204Bs

"Not later than June 1, 2012, the Employer will eliminate the usage of 204Bs except in the absence or vacancy of a supervisor for 14 days or more. The usage of a 204B in this exception is normally limited to no more than 90 days." If you are facing this situation, ask for the documents that show there is a vacancy or absence. Request a copy of the management posting. If management can prove there is a vacant job, they would have 90 days to fill the position with a certified supervisor. Employees from other bargaining units may be utilized as 204Bs within the clerk craft, but they must follow the rules quoted above and on page 378 of the contract. Clerks may also be used as 204Bs in other

crafts. Once again, they are restricted to the same provisions.

MPWU Convention

Congratulations to President John Marcotte for keeping up with the committee reports and convention business. Convention delegates are willing to give their time to participate in and do the Union's very important work at convention. As convention delegates and stewards you inspire me every day: your grievances, your questions, your political activism, show that you know Democracy is not a free ride. This is where we live, where we work. This is where our children and our grandchildren will live and work. This is our country and your belief in the Democratic process makes it great.

DEADLINE
The deadline for articles for the next issue of the *Michigan Messenger* is **SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2012**



by Michael O'Hearn, National Business Agent

NBA Report

NTFT's And Holidays

Change is inevitable. With change comes opportunities and challenges. Our new contract created a new form of Full-time Regular employees called Non-Traditional Full-time employees (NTFT), sometimes called nifty. Some NTFT positions are more than eight hours of work in a day and some are less than eight hours a day. Sometimes management creates a NTFT job that is 10 hours a day, four days a week. Some of our members are very excited about these jobs because they might have three days in a row off. However, as in all things, there is good and bad in this situation. The bad comes when a holiday rolls around.

If you are in one of these jobs and take the holiday off, you will only get eight hours of holiday leave pay as all Full-time Regulars. This is because if management agreed to pay these employees 10 hours on their holiday, they would get an extra 2 hours of pay each holiday. If they work every holiday they would get more money than a traditional regular who works every holiday. Management will

not agree to this. Therefore, if you don't work the holiday, you will be two hours short for this week because you will be paid for the three days you worked 10 hours for a total of 30 hours plus 8 hours of holiday leave pay for a grand total of 38 hours. If you want to be paid forty hours this holiday week, you are going to have to use 2 hours of your annual leave. Now, if you are an employee that likes to save all your annual leave to use to get as many days off in a year as possible, you will not like this option. There are ten holidays in a year. Therefore, it will cost you 20 hours of annual leave each year to get full payment every holiday week.

Alternatively, you could just accept that you are going to have a short check for this week. Or you could just work your holiday in which case your pay would be the same as if you were in a traditional job, 40 hours of paid work hours plus 8 hours of holiday pay.

As you can see, if you bid one of the nifty jobs, you are going to have to make some tough decisions about how you are going to handle your holiday weeks. Therefore, please give this

some consideration before you bid this type of job. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. There are also nifty jobs that are 12 hours in a day. In those jobs you will be four hours short in a holiday week unless you work your holiday.

For NTFT jobs, if you work your holiday, you get to work the number of hours that is your normal schedule for that day. So, if you are scheduled 10 hours on a Monday and it is a Monday holiday, when scheduled to work on that Monday holiday, you would be guaranteed 10 hours of work.

As you can see, these four-tens, as they are called, are not all peaches and cream. You should understand this going into one of these jobs. Now, if you figure that having a long weekend throughout the year is worth either using your annual in holiday weeks or getting a short check in holiday weeks, then go for it. It is your decision to make.

Yooper Humor

Recently, while talking to a yooper postal clerk, he sold me a book called "Yooper Bars." A yooper is a person from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The book reviews over 100 bars in the Upper Peninsula. It also has a favorite joke for each bar. I thought I would share some of these jokes with you.

1. I said to my wife, "I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on a machine with fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug." She got up, threw out my beer and unplugged the TV.
2. Question: What is the problem with political jokes? Answer: They usually get elected.
3. The shortest sentence in the English language is "I am". The longest sentence in the English language is "I do".
4. A husband says to his wife, "What would you do if I won the lottery?" She says "I'd take half, then leave you". "Excellent," he replies, "I just won \$12.00, here's \$6.00."
5. A grasshopper walks into a bar. The bartender says, "Hey, we have a drink named after you." The grasshopper says, "You have a drink named Larry?"



by Lynn Pallas-Barber, National Business Agent

NBA Report

Who's Leading Who And Other Pertinent Issues

As of May 4, 2012 the new Standard Position Description of the Lead Clerks were issued. The Lead Clerk SSA, Lead Clerk Customer Service, and Lead Clerk Mail Processing were finalized and are currently being posted in the field. A joint Q&A was also signed on May 4. Well has the USPS complied? Once again the answer is in the negative. They are improperly attempting to post these hid assignments as "BQ" when they are contractually "senior qualified" assign-

ments. The postings have prematurely required bidders to fill out PS Forms 991 and KSAs. The only thing required to place a bid on a Lead Clerk is the manual bid card if still applicable or the automated bidding process.

The only requirement for bidding is seniority and the one year qualification. The Lead SSA will also have to have been window qualified and worked the window for at least one year in the past. It is also the position of the Union that the LSSA bid assignment cannot have a scheme qualification on the posting. In accordance with Article 37. 3.F, these bids will also have to have a Principal Assignment Area (PAA). It is my understanding that is being violated on some of the postings. The Lead Clerks are supposed to provide oversight, direction and support. They do not issue discipline or approve leave.

There is still some confusion on the Lead Clerks having access to TACS. The issue was addressed in the May 4, 2012 Q&A. The answer in that document was that Lead Clerks would have access with the approval of the supervisor. The supervisor must still authorize employee time using the TACS application in all sites where it is available.

Well, the USPS has now taken a different position. Assistant Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks is dealing with this issue and may have to file a headquarters dispute.

We need to remember that the intent of the Lead Clerks is to reduce the use of 204Bs. The purpose of the Lead Clerks is to bring work back to the craft. Clerks should be encouraged to bid on these positions. Let's not let the personality issues get in the way. Let's take the lead and take OUR work BACK!!!

Early Out Incentives

This continues to be a hot issue for many of the senior members who now are eligible to retire and/or may consider retiring with an early out. Informal discussions are taking place. President Guffey has made it clear that the contractual commitments made by the USPS with the new contract have to be honored before he will agree to any early out incentives. It is extremely important to stay focused on the members who will remain and make sure that our contract is upheld and honored.

PSE Health Benefits

Currently some of our PSEs are reaching their initial 360 day term. These

PSEs will now become eligible for health benefits. The Service is required to separate them for five days. To stagger the five day splits they may be split prior to the 360th day. This does not affect their eligibility for health insurance. On day 360 they will be become eligible to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. The total cost of the health insurance will be the responsibility of the PSE, unless they select the **APWU Consumer Health Plan**. The Postal Service will be required to make a contribution of 75% of the total premium is they chose our plan. It pays to belong.

Customer Care Center

On June 29, 2012 an MOU was signed between the APWU and the USPS in order to facilitate the filling of newly created clerk craft duty assignments in the Michigan Customer Care Center in Troy. One hundred and seventy (170) jobs were created to staff this facility. It is anticipated that these jobs will provide duty assignments for the majority of the impacted clerks within 50 miles. There currently are injured employees working in the Call Center in Detroit. These employees are now being impacted by Article 12 and they will also be given

continued on page 8



Clerk Craft Report



by Steve Wood,
Clerk Craft
Director

Thanks For Giving Me A Chance

This will be my first article as the Director for the state of Michigan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the MPWU for giving me this chance. I have very large shoes to fill. Richard Blake was one of the best stewards that I personally have ever worked with. Richard conducted

numerous training classes that I attended and he knew his business. Richard, on behalf of myself and the rest of the Clerks in the state of Michigan, I thank you for your service to this union. I hope that your future endeavors will be challenging and satisfying. Good Luck Richard, you will be missed.

I have not decided what theme I will use in writing articles. I am considering

using this space to educate the stewards and clerk craft employees on Article 37 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. I would like everyone to know when management is violating the contract so that grievances can be filed. If you have suggestions that will make this a better union, please feel free to contact me directly. You may contact me through the Michigan Postal Workers Union website, or by phone at 248 543-3262.

Again, this is just my chance to introduce myself to the membership. In the near future I will be meeting with President Marcotte and the rest of the craft officers. Hopefully, after that meeting I will have a better understanding of my duties and what is expected of me by the members of the state of Michigan.

I remain, Yours in Solidarity.

Area 7 Director



by Thomas Lothamer,
Area 7
Director

— Education —

If you are a wise person you believe that you are never too old to learn new things. The proof of that is all around us. As stewards and officers, we develop in our own way sharing a common purpose to be a cohesive united organization.

The Michigan Postal Workers Union convention has come to a close and the American Postal Workers Union convention is on the horizon. I have the honor to be a representative at both. I try to be a voice for those of us in the “smaller” offices (level 20 and below). I am once again reminded of the all powerful dollar. Yes, the same that the USPS is claiming they have run out of, the one that today’s Congress is stalling until postal insolvency and mandatory pre-funding from 2006. We have the support of the Senate but not the House of Representatives. From what I can see so far, the President hasn’t weighed in on this issue yet, but I am confident that his support is for those of us in the Unions amongst the USPS.

How many hours will I get today, this week, this month? Will I have a job today, this week, this month? We fight with your help to make sure we are asking the right questions. There are no elites in the Union, there are some who rise to better paying positions, just as you have in any organization but we all started and will all finish as stewards. I wish we had more of a Senate set up where no matter what size office you come from you had an equal say over the present and future instead

of this Congressional divisiveness of the bigger your local the stronger your say. It is so hard to get what we need in these smaller offices; we need more representation for one and we need more resources for another. We need more commitment from our National and State levels that we are here to stay and we will be a force to be reckoned with today and tomorrow.

The cuts are getting deeper, some of the best stewards that we have at our disposal

are no longer in the game. For whatever reason, politics, retirement, health, and of course the almighty dollar. More and more expenses, leave and work without pay is becoming the new way to represent, as if we haven’t given enough already, heart and soul cost more today than crude and corn.

The education of our members, stewards, and officers has entered a new era and I hope the quality of learning it brings is worthy of the end result.

Area 9 Director



by Jennifer Atkins,
Area 9
Director

— Hello —

Hello, Jennifer Adkins here. Thanks to all for selecting me as Area 9 Director at the State Convention.

It is exciting having this opportunity

but it has been a slow start.

I look forward to helping APWU members in small offices and members-at-large within the 493-494 zip codes. If you are in need of representation or even have some questions, I am easy enough to reach.

My email is Jadkins1978@hotmail.com and my cell phone number is 231-830-7140. I will be happy to help.

I hope everyone is having a great summer.

Vets Can't Vote?

by Paul Felton, Editor

“Gil Parr is an Air Force veteran and proud of it. He carries his VA card with him wherever he goes and uses it a lot. So when he recently voted, Parr showed his VA card. To his surprise, he was told his VA card was not valid for voting. Though Parr had his driver’s license, he walked out in protest because he knows other veterans whose only form of ID is a VA card – and they will be denied the right to vote.”

Thus begins a letter from national AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker to Allen Vaughan, President of the Space Coast Area Local in Florida. The letter was reprinted in that APWU Local’s newsletter, the *New Viewpoint*. Also reprinted was a letter from Florida Senator Bill Nelson, who has requested a Justice Department

review of Florida’s new election law to determine whether it makes it harder for young people, seniors, and minorities to vote. His letter ends with the words, “I don’t think we should be passing laws or conducting purges aimed at unduly limiting lawful citizens from exercising a fundamental right in our democracy – the right to vote.”

Florida was the state where in 2000, a private company was hired to conduct a purge of convicted felons from the voter rolls – and this company eliminated thousands of innocent people whose names resembled those of convicted felons (e.g., if there was a felon named Willie Robertson, they eliminated Willie Roberts). Many of those eliminated were in African-American neighborhoods. (The best source on this subject is a book by Greg Palast, “The Best

Democracy Money Can Buy.”) It was a blatant attempt to help one political party by suppressing votes in favor of another party.

In the name of combating alleged “voter fraud,” many states have enacted legislation that in fact will limit democracy, often with a partisan goal in mind. The fact that even veterans are being affected shows how extreme these measures are. The solution is to eliminate the photo ID requirement altogether. Neither veterans, nor seniors who don’t drive, nor poor people, nor any other group should have obstacles placed in their path on Election Day.

Note: The latest word from Florida is that the courts and the Justice Department have stepped in. But voter suppression remains a national issue.



by John
Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Veteran's Report

— PR-CC-TY —

PR stands for **Please Read**. You don't have to be a Veteran to read the Veterans' Report. You'd be surprised how many important things in the report not only pertain to Veterans, but also may affect their families and spouses. Besides there may be information you can pass along to a co-worker, neighbor, or family member that just might help them out. You'll see what I mean at the end of this month's article.

CC stands for **Convention Comments**. I'm not political, so I sometimes have a hard time understanding why some things are changed. For example, at the MPWU Convention, the Veterans Director and a few other people were voted off the Executive Board to Save Costs??? I didn't know I was costing the MPWU any money, other than what my job description stated in the Constitution. That being said, it was a great convention, and it was really good seeing so many National Officers there.

TY stands for **Thank You**. I would like to thank all the delegates at the Convention for their overwhelming support in my reappointment as MPWU Veterans Director. When the time came for nominations, I saw four people approach the microphones. As Mr. Moyer nominated me for the position, what a sigh of relief it was for me when I looked back to see who the other three people were going to nominate, and they all turned away and returned to their seats.

Help a Veteran

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently completed a media campaign for its call center **Coaching Into Care**, a telephone service which provides assistance to **family members and friends** trying to encourage their Veteran to seek health care for possible readjustment and mental health issues. **Coaching into Care** is a valuable service for **family members and friends** of Veterans, who might be reluctant to seek mental health care. "In the last three years, VA has devoted more people, programs, and resources toward mental health services to serve the growing number of Veterans seeking mental health care, and this marketing effort is designed to expand our reach to those who need our services the most," said Eric Shinseki, head of the VA.

The **Coaching Into Care** service offers free coaching to callers, with no limit to the number of calls they can make. The goal is to connect a Veteran

with VA care in his or her community with the help and encouragement of **family members or friends**. Callers will be coached on solving specific logistical problems and ways to encourage the Veteran to seek care while respecting his or her right to make personal decisions.

The service is available **toll-free at 1-888-823-7458**, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday, and online at **http://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/**. If a Veteran is experiencing an acute crisis, callers should contact the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** for immediate help. **Coaching into Care** works directly with the Veterans Crisis Line and the Caregiver Support Line to provide guidance and referrals. Since April, as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations, Secretary Shinseki has announced that the VA would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of over 20,000 mental health staff to help meet the increased demand for mental health services.

Arlington Update

The Army and its leadership has returned Arlington National Cemetery to the revered status that the nation expected and that those interred and their families deserve. In the wake of a June 2010 Army Inspector General report, the Army fired cemetery management, and embraced technology to replace an antiquated 3 x 5-inch card recordkeeping system that was one fire away from total destruction. Each grave marker has since been digitally photographed, and a new GPS-linked smart phone app, **due out this fall**, will help online visitors tour the cemetery from home. The Army has also created a geospatial mapping system that allows cemetery staff to synchronize all their daily operations in real time, to include burials, public ceremonies, and infrastructure upkeep and repair – a first for any national cemetery.

Forever Young

American Veterans age 65 and older, are the sole focus of the **Forever Young Senior Wish Organization**. Diane Hight, founder, says this is our way of saying Thank You to the soldiers who served our Country and safeguarded our freedoms. Many groups of Veterans have approached the foundation, longing to visit war sites and memorials together. Last fall, Forever Young held several fundraisers to finance an excursion to Normandy, France; the Battle of the Bulge site in Belgium; and a cruise down the Rhine River. The trips were so healing, said

Ms. Hight who escorted the group. Two upcoming excursions are in the planning stages for the fall of 2012; a visit to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC; and a journey back to Pearl Harbor. Veterans can contact the Forever Young Senior Wish Organization at 901-299-7516 or visit them online at **www.foreveryoungseniorwish.org**. (Thanks to Ms. Colleen V Zinger, 480-481 Area Local).

Applebee's M. M.

Applebee's is now celebrating Military Monday's, **every Monday**. Veterans and Active duty Military will now be able to get a 30% discount, all day, every Monday, at Applebee's for any entree they order for themselves. To be eligible for the Military Monday's program, the Veteran must provide some type of proof of service, which includes a U. S. Uniform Services I.D. card, U.S. Uniform Services Retired I.D. card, current Leave and Earnings Statement, Veterans Organization card, a photograph in Uniform, or wearing a Uniform, DD-214, Citation or Commendation.

PTSD Help

In observance of June as PTSD Awareness Month, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has begun a new online initiative, **About Face**, focused on helping Veterans recognize PTSD symptoms and motivating them to seek treatment. "We must do all we can to help Veterans identify possible indicators that they may be suffering from PTSD," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "It requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to be effective. We hope that this initiative, while just one aspect of our program, will play an important role in that effort." The **About Face** campaign introduces viewers to Veterans from all eras who have experienced PTSD and turned their lives around with treatment. Through personal videos, viewers will meet Veterans and hear how PTSD has affected them and their loved ones. Visitors will also learn the steps to take to gain control of their lives.

About Face, which is PTSD specific, was designed as a complementary campaign to VA's current **Make the Connection** (**www.MakeTheConnection.net**) campaign. **Make the Connection** uses personal testimonials to illustrate true stories of Veterans who faced life events, experiences, physical ailments, or psychological symptoms; reached out for support; and found ways to overcome their challenges. "VA is

committed to ensuring the men and women who bravely served our nation can access the resources and services tailored for them that can lead to a more fulfilling life," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "We want Veterans to recognize themselves in these stories and to feel optimistic that they can overcome their challenges with proper treatment.

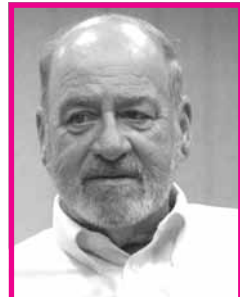
The month of June was set aside to urge everyone to increase awareness of PTSD so those in need can get effective treatment that will enable them to lead productive, fulfilling and enjoyable lives." **About Face**, was launched in June, in time to help bring attention to PTSD Awareness Month. It is located on the National Center for PTSD website, **www.ptsd.va.gov**. There viewers will watch as Veterans candidly describe how they knew they had PTSD; how PTSD affected the people they love; why they didn't get help right away; what finally caused them to seek treatment; what treatment is like and how treatment helps. The VA provides effective PTSD treatment and conducts extensive research on PTSD, including prevention.

Those interested in further information can go to **www.ptsd.va.gov** to find educational materials including courses for providers on the best practices in PTSD treatment and the award-winning VA/DoD PTSD Coach Mobile App for electronic devices, which provides symptom management strategies.

Why????????????????

Some of you may be wondering why this month's article started with a mental help item, and has ended with another mental help item. If it bores you, I'm sorry. But the real reason is to bring awareness of possible mental health problems arising in many of our Veterans. It's sad to say, but the present suicide rate for Veterans is 1 a day. Our Veterans are keeping too much locked inside of themselves, and taking a way out that hurts family and friends, and leaves us all wondering what went wrong and how we could've helped. The suicide rate among Veterans is an alarming epidemic.

We all know a Veteran. He may be a recent Veteran, or even an older Veteran. Sometimes the horrors of War come on quickly, or may even take years to perpetuate. A sound, a smell, an action by someone else, who knows what might stir up that key element that brings the horror back to the Veteran. Please watch, look, and listen. If you think a Veteran needs help, talk to him, or find someone willing to talk to them. **THANK YOU!!!**



by Al LaBrecque, Retiree's Chapter President

Retiree Involvement

So Once Were We

“... Remember (active members), as you are now, so once were we. As we are now, soon you shall be. So prepare to retire and follow me.” (adapted from a tombstone epitaph).

State Chapter Convention: 12 years and the 6th Chapter Biennial Constitutional Convention saw the greatest participation ever with all Local Chapters represented. Retirees' Dept. Dir. Judy Beard graced us with her presence and with her wisdom in addressing retiree delegates and guests. Judy was honored with the State Union tradition of dedicating the Convention to a distinguished favorite daughter or son. Well deserved! APWU Sec.-Treas., Liz Powell and Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans Secretary, Richard McInerney, were also featured speakers. Otherwise, it was business as usual.

Thanks to MPWU Sec.-Treas. Darren Joyce, and host Traverse City Area Local, we enjoyed excellent convention accommodations. The significant actions of the Convention were: Approval to send the State Chapter E-Board to the pre-APWU National Convention Retirees' Dept. Conference in L.A., Aug. 18-19; To amend the Chapter Constitution establishing a Travel & Expense Policy to comply with IRS and Dept. of Labor requirements; Debate on our paramount retiree Resolutions and State Chapter officer elections. Re-elected without opposition were myself as President, and Trustees; Charles Kolhoff (Saginaw), Patricia Miller (Flint), and Al Fouche (Detroit). Nominations took an unexpected turn with V.P. George Hendricks and Sec.-Treas. Lynn Charles Walker declining nomination, reminding me once again not to take anything for granted!

George faithfully served as State Chapter V.P. since our 2000 charter,

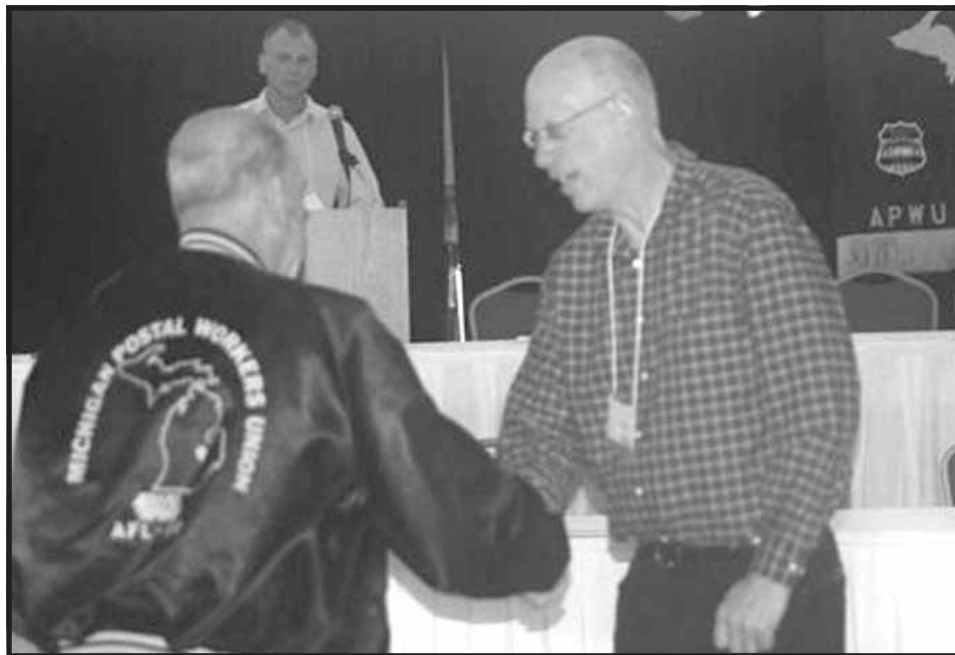


Retiree George Hendricks addressing the Convention.

doing double duty as his WMAL Chapter Pres. Brother Walker served one term as Sec.-Treas. where we worked very closely and well together. I personally owe both a deep debt of gratitude for their loyal service and dedication to the retiree membership. I'll miss those close relationships. The initial unexpected event was quickly remedied with the nomination and election of immediate past MPWU Pres., Gary Van Hoogstraten as Chapter V.P., and past TCAL Local and State officer Paul Browning as Sec.-Treas., ensuring that the State Chapter remains in good, capable hands. The State Retiree Chapter sponsored a hospitality "Pizza Night" in cooperation with the host TCAL Convention Committee chaired by Local #531 Secretary, Steve Duede (I might add; with distinct pleasure) that exceeded all expectations resulting in over \$200 in "COPA tips."

Then there was the "main event" State Union Convention, where there's rarely a dull moment in Michigan. Unusual was that virtually every Resolution was a proposed constitutional amendment to either the MPWU or APWU Constitution. Weighty stuff! Res. #1 and Res. #2 were our proposed retiree amendments to the APWU Constitution. Here again; one should NEVER take anything for granted! So, shame on me for taking heretofore 100% support for retiree initiatives as a given. To my utter dismay, the Resolutions Committee recommended non-concurrence on Res. #1; Retiree eligibility to vote for the top 3 APWU General Officers and 4 resident department officers, all of whom directly affect retiree membership. I won't get into what transpired next, but it "wasn't pretty." As I always do when submitting resolutions, I had offered at the outset to meet with the Committee if there were any issues on any of our resolutions. That didn't happen. Had I been afforded that opportunity the ensuing reaction might have been avoided. Enough said. To the delegate's credit, the first order of business on Saturday was to reconsider Res. #1 which was then adopted unanimously by voice vote, and my B.P. returned to acceptable levels. Res. #2 to establish a Retirees' Dept. Technician position was concurred in the original Committee report.

It's my understanding that the basis for non-concurrence on Res. #1 boiled down to the time and again mantra: "If \$36-per-year-dues-pay retirees want the right to vote, let 'em pay full Union dues."



Steve Duede of the host Local expressing appreciation to Al LaBrecque and all of the retirees at the MPWU Convention.

Space in this column doesn't permit reiterating all our bullet points for adopting Res. #1. They're all in the "Whereas" of the Resolution(s)! But, it always comes down to the "Almighty Dollar." It's my intent to furnish a letter to all Michigan APWU Locals and MPWU State delegates to the National Convention where I'll enumerate all the reasons why Res. #1 deserves Michigan delegate support.

I invite those delegates who attended the MPWU Convention to revisit your Resolutions Book and really study the "Whereas" of Res. #1 (which is Constitution Res. #26 in the national convention book) to fully understand why retired members deserve your support in L.A. Try fast forwarding to when YOU will be a retired member. Allow me to share a few astute observations offered by some of the Mothers and Fathers of our Union:

"When I was an active member I voted for a total of 18 national officers. Now it's a huge deal that we want to vote for the 7 that have a direct influence on retiree lives. It's a fact that the highest percentage voting bloc is in the 60+ age group. Could it be certain national officers are frightened of the influence the retiree vote might have?"

"A guy retires and not only has to deal with a Congress going after our earned benefits, and now we have to fight our own Union? I'd bet money that 99.9% of our retiree members paid their full dues a lot longer than the vast majority objecting to giving us this limited voting right."

"Among several arguments for denying retiree voting rights seems

to be retirees can acquire full voting rights by paying full dues (per capita) as an active member of their Chapter. Under that logic, I can buy those rights in what amounts to a poll tax. I thought those went the way of Jim Crow laws."

"So, under this structure, the whole thing comes down to economics. Retirees pay less, so their voting rights are limited. Don't let the Republicans in Congress get wind of this. Next they'll pass a law limiting voting rights of people who pay a small amount in taxes!"

"It comes down to this; the APWU wants our money, just not us! I don't want to be where I'm not wanted. That being APWU member's and active Union leader's attitude toward those of us who helped build this Union; I can take my money and support where I'm appreciated!"

As for myself; after 20 years, the APWU 2012 National Convention may well be a defining moment for retiree inclusion in the APWU House, and possibly the future of the Retirees' Dept., second largest department in the APWU. There are other federal retiree and labor-based organizations like the Alliance for Retired Americans, where I can put my time, energy, and meager funds to effective use where I know I'm welcome. APWU delegates in L.A. will help in making that personal decision. Another 50+ year retired member, in a takeoff on the famous Moe Biller quote, puts it this way; "And, the B.S. continues!"

Be Strong! (Or, will it be: "Be Gone"?!)



Who's Leading Who And Other Pertinent Issues

continued from page 5

the option to preference a job in the new Customer Care Center.

Forty and possible more of these jobs were posted for bid to employees of the Metroplex. Any residual vacancies should any remain will be given to impacted employees in Lansing, Saginaw and Flint who stated a preference on a 21 day manual eReassign that was posted in those office. Over all this has created 170 new jobs in the

Detroit metropolitan area which is a very positive thing.

The assignments created for the Call Center are Level 4 and Level 5 Customer Care Agents. It is my understanding that the pay level will be challenged at our HQ Level.

Five Level 6 Lead Customer Care Agents were also established. The management staffing is over and above as usual. There will be three Level 25 managers, three Level 19 supervisors

and one Level 19 Systems Support supervisor.

Excessing

As the Article 12 NBA, just when you think you've seen it all management creates another fiasco and violates someone's contractual rights. They are desperately and deliberately trying to get rid of employees. Prior to moving an employee into another craft which is more physically demanding, ELM Section 864 requires a medical assessment and/or physical examination. Excessing clerks who cannot carry mail into the letter carrier craft is a clear violation of Article 12 and Article 19. In fact, some of these injured clerks started out as injured carriers and were reassigned into the Clerk Craft. Well now they are being excessed into the Carrier Craft and their medical restrictions prohibit them from carrying mail.

Article 12.5.C.5.a (4) provides for the involuntary reassignment of full-time employees who meet the minimum qualification by juniority, to residual vacancies in other crafts within the installation. Minimum qualifications are usually prerequisite entrance examination, a driving license, an experience requirement, or a demonstration of a skill. The city letter carrier job is much more physically demanding. The physical requirements for a carrier can be found on the BQnet (former EL-303).

In conjunction with ELM Section 863 the EL-312 provides postal rules and regulations which require the medical assessment be performed prior to the excessing/reassignment. Section 233.13 requires a medical assessment to be administered only when the physical requirements are more demanding. Section 571 provides the policy that a medical

assessment to determine medical suitability is mandatory for all changes to jobs having more demanding physical requirements. Section 572 provides the purpose of the medical suitability process to ensure that selected applicants are able to perform the duties of their new positions without posing a direct harm to themselves or others. These requirements are supposed to protect and preserve the overall safety of the workforce. Section 573 of the EL-312 is the process overview. Section 573.1 requires management to initiate a request for a medical assessment only after a bona fide job offer has been extended, but prior to affecting the appointment (excessing/reassignment).

Excessing clerks into the carrier craft without the assessment and the necessary physical examination is a blatant violation of their contractual rights. These grievances need to be filed before they are moved.

Pool and Relief

Just recently in southern IL, management has created some Pool & Relief bid duty assignments in order to create residual vacancies in some surrounding associate offices. Well, this is another bungling fiasco. The new language in the Pool and Relief MOU permits the employees to pool and relieve outside of their installation. They can even relieve Postmasters and supervisors in other facilities. Well in the Gateway District they have no common sense. They posted these Pool and Relief bid assignments with one-hundred and twenty (120) offices listed on the bids where the pool & relief may be assigned. We are working to get this corrected. It appears to me they have no common sense at all! What's new?

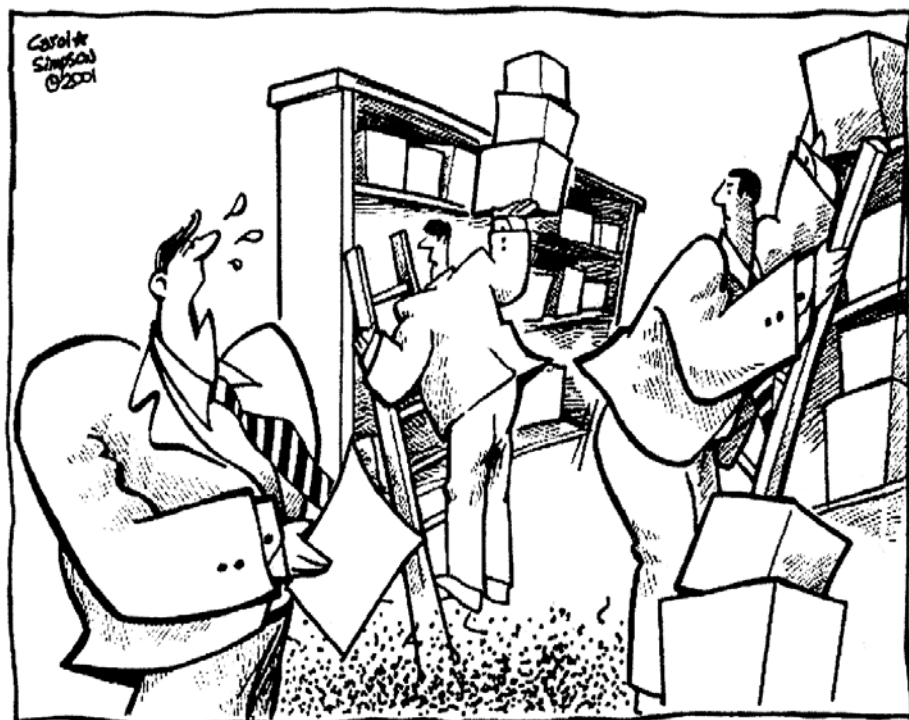
Enjoy the summer and be safe!

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