

# Michigan

## MESSENGER



Volume 42, Number 167  
July-August, 2013

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

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Tourney at the Table .....	Page 2
Attention Retiree .....	Page 2
Editor's Report.....	Page 3
Area 10 Director's Report .....	Page 3
Current Issues .....	Page 4
Area 7 Director's Report.....	Page 4
Veterans's Report .....	Page 5
PMG 5 yr. plan .....	Page 6
Group Legal Plan.....	Page 6
Detroit Bankruptcy .....	Page 7
Retiree Involvement.....	Page 8

## President's Report



by John Marcotte,  
President

# Focus On What's Important

Last fall Governor Snyder lied and misled Michigan voters in order to help the out of state Koch brother's scheme to make Michigan a right to work state. Yesterday he attempted to force Detroit to stop or drastically reduce paying retirees their pensions. Sending his appointed lackey racing to the courthouse to try and ram through a bankruptcy filing before the courts could rule whether retiree obligations could be included in a bankruptcy filing for the city.

Today an Ingham County Circuit judge ordered that Detroit's federal bankruptcy filing be withdrawn. Ruling the governor and Detroit's emergency manager violated the state constitution, "It's absolutely needed," said Judge Rosemary Aquilina,

observing she hopes Gov. Rick Snyder "reads certain sections of the (Michigan) constitution and reconsiders his actions" The judge said state law guards against retirement benefits being "diminished," but there will be no such protection in federal bankruptcy court. This is after one of our governor's first acts was to cut taxes for corporations and pay for it by raising taxes on retirees!

This is what happens when workers get distracted by fringe issues and don't vote their paycheck. Growing up it was called kitchen table (where parents discussed paying the bills) or bread and butter politics. In my neighborhood all the parents voted for politicians who were pro worker and they all voted. That generation knew corporations are created for one purpose, to maximize profits for the owners. To

accomplish that corporations will relentlessly try to lower wages and benefits for their workers. Social Security, Medicare, Minimum Wage, OSHA and the right to unionize were not benefits granted by benevolent companies or government. These laws and programs were hard fought victories for working Americans made by pro worker politicians elected by workers.

By getting workers to focus on secondary issues or issues that will never be addressed or simply not vote we have elected politicians that are determined to eliminate the middle class. Don't believe me? All of the above programs and laws are under attack by our own elected representatives. Wages for workers have gone down while profits and cash reserves for corporations are at an all time high. General Electric

pays no taxes and a postal worker pays a higher percent of taxes than Mitt Romney.

Workers who stood up and demanded a better life, safe working conditions, a retirement with dignity and health care built the middle class. They did it by taking to the streets, shutting down the workplace and being politically active. That is the only way to stop us from becoming a country of a very few haves and many have not's. Get informed, get active and let's get back to voting kitchen table politics. As individuals we are not going to agree on every issue but it is easy to agree on which candidate will be better serve working families. Until our elected officials are working to restore prosperity and the American dream to the middle class nothing else matters.

## NBA Report



by Michael O'Hearn,  
National Business Agent

# Weingarten Rights

The National Labor Relations Board long ago decided that employees have a right to union representation at investigatory interviews. These rights have become known as the Weingarten Rights. Basically, you must clearly request union representation when you believe the interview could result in discipline. Management does not have to offer this option. You must request it. Once requested, you must be given union representation or the interview must be terminated. If management continues the interview without providing union representation, you may refuse to answer any questions from that point until you have union representation. You cannot be disciplined for refusing to answer questions after you have requested union representation. The following is an example of a card that our Local gave to members which the members can either read or present to management prior to a meeting with management where the member believes that discipline or termination may be the result:

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting. Until my representative arrives, I choose not to participate in this discussion."

Then, you do not answer any more questions. Refuse to say anything more until your steward gets there. If they read you the Miranda Rights ("You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be held against you. You have the right to a lawyer . . ."), stop talking except to say "I want a lawyer." You are about to be charged with a crime. Please protect yourself in these situations.

### Loaner Clerks and Travel

If you are loaning to a different office than your home office, you are entitled to payment for your travel time and travel mileage in most cases. In the Joint Contract Interpretation Manual 2012 (JCIM) on page 271, it states that "Whether a part-time flexible clerk who is required to work outside his/her home office is

entitled to compensable travel time or mileage is determined by applying the applicable provisions of the Section 438 of the Employee and Labor relations Manual (ELM) and Chapter 7 of the Handbook F-15." The applicable provision of the ELM is Section 438.133 titled "One Day Assignment Outside the Local Commuting Area." The travel is outside the Local Commuting Area if it is travel outside the suburban area immediately

surrounding the employee's official duty station (ELM 438.112). Therefore, if you are loaning to an office that is not a suburb of the town of your home office, you are entitled to travel time and mileage. You should always insist on your travel time and mileage, because your union has negotiated this important benefit for you. We will assist you in getting this benefit, if management refuses to pay you this benefit.

## Endorsements

On July 11th the MPWU Executive Board voted to endorse the following candidates in the national APWU elections:

President .....	Mark Dimondstein
Executive Vice President .....	Debby Szeredy
Secretary-Treasurer .....	Violetta "Vi" Ward
Industrial Relations Dr. ....	Tony D McKinnon Sr.
Legislative/Political Dr. ....	John L. Marcotte
Organization Director .....	Anna Smith
Health Plan Dr. ....	Robert Furbush
Clerk Craft Dr. ....	Clint Burelson
Clerk NBA "A" .....	Christopher E Ulmer
Clerk NBA "B" .....	Dave Baskin
Maintenance NBA "C" .....	Curtis Walker
Retiree Convention Delegate .....	Al LaBrecque



- President** .....John Marcotte  
U&C (989) 619-1741  
e-Mail: John.L.Marcotte@gmail.com
- Executive Secretary** .....Michael Long  
U: (616) 977-1050; C: (616) 302-1409  
e-Mail: mdlblong@gmail.com
- Secretary-Treasurer** ..... Darren Joyce  
W: (810) 257-1530; U: (810) 239-0931;  
FAX: (810) 239-6879  
e-Mail: fmail11@comcast.net
- Dir. of Edca. & Research** ..... Lucy Morton  
U: (248) 543-3262; C: (248) 660-3139  
e-Mail: lucyapwu56@hotmail.com
- Editor** .....Paul Felton  
U: (248) 543-3262  
e-Mail: pdf111@comcast.net
- Legislative Director** ..... Jesus Gonzales  
W: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 528-9980  
e-Mail: cmalprez300@yahoo.com
- HR/Injury Comp. Director** ..... Ron Krumrie  
W: (231) 946-9616;  
e-Mail: Olcubman@aol.com
- Clerk Craft Director**..... Steve Wood  
U: (248) 543-3262 (Ferndale)  
U: (248) 758-5786 (Metroplex)  
e-Mail: Swood@apwu480.org
- Maintenance Craft Director** .....Jason Rushing  
C: (736) 634-9294; H: (736) 953-0581  
e-Mail: jaysdeals@att.net
- Motor Vehicle Service Craft Dir.** .....Joe Wrobel  
U: (248) 543-3262; W: (248) 546-7146  
e-Mail: yrubnu@hotmail.com
- Veterans Director** .....John Smeekens  
W: (248) 546-7146; U: (248) 543-3262  
e-Mail: mpwuvetdirector@ameritech.net
- Area 1 Director (480/481)** .....Larry Moyer  
W: (248) 619-1590; H: (810) 678-3479;  
C: (810) 338-2659  
e-Mail: apwu6723@bignet.net
- Area 2 Director (482)**.....James Stevenson  
C: (313) 465-0757; U: (313) 964-1100  
e-Mail: jstevenson1995@yahoo.com
- Area 3 Director (483)**.....Robin Ely  
W: (734) 697-0047  
e-Mail: relyapwu480-481@charter.net
- Area 4 Director (484/485)** .....Laura Bullock  
W: (810)257-1567; U: (810)239-0931;  
H: (810) 606-0465  
e-Mail: fmail11@comcast.net
- Area 5 Director (486/487)** .....Joanna Atkinson  
W: (989) 771-5718; C: (989) 295-5454  
e-Mail: Joanna.atkinson2@sbcglobal.net
- Area 6 Director (488/489)** .....Mary Stephenson  
W: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 980-6125  
e-Mail: mpwuaread6director@yahoo.com
- Area 7 Director (490/491)** .....Thomas Lothamer  
U: (517) 677-6198; H: (517) 639-4873  
e-Mail: tlothamer@msn.com
- Area 8 Director (492)**.....Wendy Kempke  
W: (517) 263-5809; C: (419) 377-4595  
e-Mail: kempke.wk@gmail.com
- Area 9 Director (493/494)** .....Jennifer Adkins  
C: (231) 830-7140; W: (231) 722-1414  
e-Mail: jadkins1978@hotmail.com
- Area 10 Director (496)** .....Ron Brown  
W: (231) 933-1020; C: (231) 357-2618  
e-Mail: Area10Director@yahoo.com
- Area 11 Director (497)** ..... Vacant
- Area 12 Director (498/499)**..... Theresa Granquist  
U: (906) 774-6303; C: (906) 396-6103  
e-Mail: tgranquist@att.net
- P.O.W.E.R. Rep** ..... Karen Hodges  
H: (616) 453-7091; W/U: (616) 776-1489  
e-Mail: kjhodmich@aol.com
- State Retiree Chpt. President** .....Al LaBrecque  
H: (989) 736-8173  
e-Mail: allab@sisna.com
- MPWU Aux. President** ..... Vacant
- MPWU Historian**..... Vacant
- MPWU Advisor**..... Gary VanHoogstraten  
H: (989) 894-2656  
e-Mail: hystreet@att.net w



by Linda Turney, National Business Agent

## Turney at the Table

# 204B Temporary Assignments, Article 25

*When you read, you empower yourself.*

*When you write, you influence others.*  
According to Article 25.3 (page 130 in the CBA), management must provide **in advance** of a higher level assignment, copies of the PS 1723 to the Union. This would include assignments for 204b temporary supervisory positions. A properly filled out form should have the beginning date and the ending date of the temporary assignment. If management cancels the assignment before end of the specified date on the PS 1723, it is required to reissue an amended form.

In the event that management changes the 204b assignment in the middle, beginning or end, there is nothing in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) or the JCIM that suggests that management may bypass the requirement to submit a separate Form 1723. The 1723 must be specific. The 1723 is the ruling document of the assignment and must be specific as to when the temporary assignment begins and ends. In a recent arbitration award (F10C-1F-C 11365864), Arbitrator Kathy Fragnoli, states that:

*Article 25 requires that the Union be given advance notice before an employee is detailed to 204b status. It does not state that the Union must be given advance notice when such a detail is cancelled before the end of an assigned tour. Therefore, it appears from this record that Management may send 204b supervisors back to the craft and submit the appropriate paperwork to the Union after the fact.*

The ruling in this case allows for changes in the temporary 204b assignment, but the Union should be informed even “after the fact.” Our contract therefore requires that the Union be given information regarding a detail to 204b status in advance of the initial temporary assignment and subsequent to

any change in that assignment. Management has an obligation to eliminate the usage of 204bs except in the absence or vacancy of a supervisor for 14 days or more and normally limited to no more than 90 days. We have a right to monitor the temporary assignment of 204bs and we should do so.

### Get with the Program

Max Duty Assignment Tool also known as MDAT allows stewards to gather information and review employees’ schedules so as to create “desirable duty assignments” as required by Article 37.3.A. This program is a valuable tool to use in assessing up to 10 duty assignments in different levels, grades and even crafts. The program tracks work hours which can address excessing issues, retreat rights, and even part time flexible hours which may create duty assignments.

In order to prove that there are sufficient hours for a Full time Duty Assignment(s), NTFT or Traditional, the Union must show that enough work hours exist to post jobs. Stewards can accomplish this by considering ALL work hours in an installation. We can combine hours and carve out jobs. It is the same concept as maximization, however that was a tedious and mind numbing process of charting hours on the 24 hour chart. We upgraded that to an excel program, which still required long hours of preparing charts and graphs. This type of grievance took hours and hours to collect and present evidence in a logical way. Often, we were not allowed the Union time necessary to gather and organize the information to create new duty assignments. MDAT makes it much easier and we should use this tool whenever we think there may hours to create a new duty assignment.

MDAT is a data based program that can use work hours from a variety of

places to create duty assignments. Your President can go to the APWU website and follow the tutorial program on the MEMBER ONLY page. If you are in a small office that does not use electronic time cards, you will have to enter the information manually. If your office uses electronic badges, stewards can request Comma Separated Value or CSV clock rings for the sections you are investigating. You can give your supervisors a thumb drive or a disk to upload the information. This technology is a great new way to create desirable duty assignments.

### NLRB, Busting rules for Obama

Just yesterday, July 16, Senate Democrats were prepared to change historic filibuster rules making it easier for Presidents to get confirmation on their appointed nominees. In January 2012, in a recess appointment copying a Bush administrative tactic, President Obama appointed Sharon Block and Richard Griffin for positions on the NLRB. In April, President Obama nominated Block and Griffin to the NLRB again. A court case concerning the recess appointments has been accepted by the Supreme Court. Senate Republicans would have nothing to do with confirming these appointees. The Senate agreed Tuesday to replace those selections with Nancy Shiffer, associate general counsel at the AFL-CIO, and Kent Hirozawa, who is chief counsel to the NLRB Chairman, Mark Gaston Pearce.

These compromise appointments essentially allow the NLRB to once again function without the Constitutional question mark hanging over its head. That gives Republicans and Democrats most of what they want.

## Attention Retirees

National APWU Officer Elections are coming up. You will receive your ballot sometime after September 13. APWU retirees are eligible to vote not only for retiree officers, but for the following national officers: President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Legislative/Political Director, Health Plan Director – and we would vote for Human Relations Director but that race is unopposed. This is the first time retirees could vote for so many positions. Be sure to take advantage of your democratic rights to the fullest.

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	

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. 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

# Fighting The Same Old Battles

It felt great. Marching down Woodward Avenue in Detroit with a huge crowd. There were contingents from a number of unions, religious groups, civil rights groups and other community organizations. It was a true coming together.

The date was June 22nd. The occasion was the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Walk led by Dr. Martin Luther King Junior in Detroit in 1963. It was in June, 1963 in Detroit that Dr. King first delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, that gained national attention two months later when he delivered the same speech before a national audience in Washington. By the way, my older sister was in Washington to hear that speech.

One of the achievements of that historic movement 50 years ago was the Voting Rights Act. So how ironic and heartbreaking was it that three days after our freedom walk this year, the Supreme Court rendered a decision that gutted the Voting Rights Act. We are fighting the same old battles.

Racism has not disappeared in America. And suppression of the vote is systematic, especially in states where Republican governments control the voting process. Whether this is done for racist reasons or whether it is done because people of color tend to vote for Democrats I can't really say – probably a combination of both. Whether the tactic is to pass voter id laws, to ensure ridiculously long waits to vote in certain neighborhoods by supplying too few voting machines, or a variety of other tactics, partisan tactics to tip the scales are part of the GOP strategy. Ironically, the Supreme Court decision never would've turned out this way if not for the systematic disfranchisement of African-American voters in Florida in the 2000 elections. A private company was hired to cleanse the voter rolls of convicted felons, and this company went overboard. If your name was close to the name of a convicted felon (like if your name was Charlie Williams and there was a felon named Charlie Williamson) and you lived in an African-American neighborhood, your name was taken off the eligible voter list. Had these non-felons been allowed to vote, it is probable that Al Gore would've been elected President and different justices would be sitting on the Supreme Court.

The labor movement should join with civil rights activists in fighting these battles, for two reasons. For one thing,



June 22 Freedom Walk in Detroit.

it is the right thing to do. For another, it is in our own self-interest. The purpose in suppressing the vote of people of color is to help elect right-wing candidates who it just so happens are hostile to the rights of unions, workers, and the survival of the Postal Service.

### Chain, Chain, Chain

I wonder how many readers of this article now the meaning of the term "Chained CPI." It is a proposal to change the way the Consumer Price Index is calculated. I'm not sure I understand all the workings of it, but I understand it will result in a substantial decrease in the income of those who rely on Social Security. It is sneaky; proponents of the Chained CPI can pretend they're not cutting anything, but over the course of time the monetary loss is quite substantial.

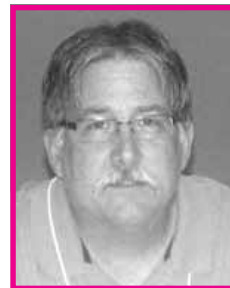
On July 2nd I was part of a delegation from the Gray Panthers that visited Senator Debbie Stabenow's office, and we met with her staff member Barbara McCallahan. The topic was the chained CPI. We received assurances that the Senator opposes the chained CPI. Ms. McCallahan suggested we also need to visit some Republican Congressmen, as the Democrats are already on our side. We agreed that was necessary, yet the visit to Senator Stabenow's office wasn't wasted. There may come a time when there's a lot of pressure on the Senator to accept the chained CPI as part of a "compromise" that includes some positive elements. It's easy to say you oppose this regressive proposal when it's standing alone, but what will happen

when the issue is more complicated. We let the Senator know that we will support her if she takes a courageous stand when the pressure is on.

I'll end this article with an observation I made at this meeting with Ms. McCallahan. When I was growing up, I was influenced by the civil rights movement. I was part of a generation that was extremely idealistic. We thought that within our lifetime we could put an end to prejudice, put an end to war, and put an end to poverty. As the years went by I became a little more realistic. But at least I thought, by the time the Baby Boomer generation reached retirement age, we would have achieved dignity and security for the elderly. Especially because there are so many of us. But it seems the opposite is the case. Because there are so many of us,

taking care of our needs is seen as an unwelcome burden by those politicians who cater primarily to the wealthy. And so we are under attack – along with working people, poor people, unions, and it seems anyone who can't write a very large check to finance someone's campaign.

All of these struggles are linked. Whether it's the attack on the public's mail service, Governor Snyder's attack on the labor movement, suppression of the vote, or the nationwide attack on public education, the same forces are at work. Our opponents understand the connections. Hopefully the 99 percent of us that are under attack will reach the same understanding and come together. Many of us were together for the Freedom Walk on June 22. We need to come together to fight the battles that lie ahead.



## Area 10 Director

by Ron  
Brown,  
Area 10  
Director

# Meeting

Due to the number of issues at the AO's in the 496 area, I would like to have another meeting with ALL AO office clerks (Full Time, Part Time, PSE's) on a date to be determined. I will be sending out letters to everybody, but if you don't hear from me by the end of the month, Please call. My number is 231-357-2618. Vince Nichols and I have gotten calls from numerous Clerks with

issues, but not all have followed up and provided us with the information that we need to file a grievance. It's important when you call us that you E-mail and or Fax us whatever you have so that we can proceed. My E-mail address is [Area10Director@yahoo.com](mailto:Area10Director@yahoo.com) and the Fax number is 231-922-1863. After you fax us, please contact one of us and make sure that we got it. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting; until then I remain yours in solidarity.



by Lynn  
Pallas-Barber,  
National  
Business Agent

## NBA Report

# — Current Issues —

### Legislative Update

The APWU and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union have announced plans to conduct a nationwide joint lobbying effort over the congressional recess from Aug. 5 to Sept. 6 to urge senators and representatives to co-sponsor the Postal Service Protection Act (H.R. 630 in the House / S. 316 in the Senate) and the Protect Overnight Delivery Act (H.R. 2459).

This effort is intended to build support for the unions' demand that Congress take action now to save the Postal Service and protect postal jobs. There are 28 co-sponsors for S. 316, 165 co-sponsors for H.R. 630, and 72 co-sponsors for H.R. 2459, but many more are needed.

In a letter President Guffey wrote, "We must bring attention to the drastic cuts in service that management has made and will continue to make if Congress doesn't act now. We must demand that Congress take action to prevent and reverse the dismantling of the mail processing network and stop the further degradation of service to the American people."

President Guffey urged locals to contact their congressional represen-

tatives' and senators' state offices to schedule an appointment as soon as possible, to explain the urgency of the House and Senate taking up postal reform before the end of USPS fiscal year on Sept. 30, 2013.

USPS management continues to dismantle the mail network and cut service and the standards. All this does is reduce service to our customers and does not fix the real problems. We need to stay involved. (*APWU Web News 086-2013, 7/17/13*).

### Custodial Cleaning Hours/PTF Clerks

In an MOU in the CBA the parties agreed that in small post offices there were less than two (2) hours or less of contracted custodial cleaning duties if those hours could not be combined into other maintenance duties the duties could then be assigned to existing APWU bargaining duty assignments. Some questions have been coming from the field as to how this is being achieved. Where these hours have been assigned to PTF clerks they are now expected to clean in between customers. So they are expected to perform a retail transaction one minute and clean the toilet the next. This work was intended to be supplemental hours and not absorbed work hours.

If this being done in a small post office the APWU has the right to request a full custodial staffing package. If an office is determined to have 2 hours or less custodial work per day, the sub contract should be terminated in accordance with its terms and the work should be given thereafter to the APWU.

Some of the MS-47 will control. Section 110 of the MS-47 addresses management's general responsibility. Section 124 states that management must exercise its judgment in order to develop a level of staffing that will maintain an acceptable level of cleanliness and a safe and healthful working environment for all employees. Section 340 addresses scheduling in smaller facilities but that would also be based on their general responsibilities and their requirement to maintain an acceptable level of cleanliness. Chapter 4 also provides for performance standards. These standards should have been relied upon in the staffing package and also provide for frequency performance.

The PTFs will not be eligible for work clothes allowance but they should dress appropriately for cleaning. They should not be forced to work in their window uniforms. Custodians perform dirty work and work with toxic materials. The window uniforms

of the clerks should not be subject to the dirt and chemicals. They should also be provided reasonable wash-up time per the provisions of Article 8.9 of the CBA. Article 14 requires management to provide a safe and clean working environment. These cleaning duties need to be given the proper time and attention and should not be absorbed by the PTFs. We got the work, let's make sure they let us do it right!!!

### Multicraft Positions

Recently there have been some questions coming from the field concerning multicraft positions. There are Standard Position Descriptions in the EL-201 which have been agreed upon as multicraft. Such positions are Training Tech, PEDC - SP#2621. This is a BQ position which is posted office wide and selected regardless of craft. This is a Clerk Craft position. Vehicle Operations & Maintenance Assistant (VOMA) - SP#2195 is a position which is posted to city carriers, clerks, bldg/equip maintenance, motor vehicle and special delivery. This is also a Senior Qualified position which is assigned to the craft of the successful bidder. A Data Collection Tech is a BQ clerk craft position which is posted in the clerk craft only. This is not a position that management can create

*continued on page 5*



by Thomas  
Lothamer,  
Area 7  
Director

## Area 7 Director

# Photocopy Of A Postmaster

As we continue to develop our arguments and defend our members the most flagrant violation is the inability for Postmasters to resolve anything at the step one level. The Postmasters in today's post office have to get approval from the P.O.O.M. just to order toilet paper for the office and so this would be a pretty good metaphor for the lack of authority they have amongst our company and in our communities.

The "goal" as it was explained was to take our company to a simpler level with a "drug store," Fred Druckar kind of approach. Well, we all work in these small towns, we know most of our community by face and some by name and so this fits a lot of our lives and lifestyles. Do you think Fred Druckar (and I apologize if I am not spelling Druckar correctly but it has been sometime since I have seen Petticote Junction) anyways, do you think Fred used his only telephone in the entire town to check with Labor or the P.O.O.M., or anyone else

to keep the office running? You already know the answer to this question. The point is the rules were laid out, here are the manuals governing the laws and operation of the Post Office and then the operation began. No muss, no fuss, the community has their trust in the local Post Office. It is said that the Post Office is still the most trusted government agency in the United States. This is a very agreeable statement, we carry a lot of integrity as the employees of the USPS, but we have lost our swagger, too much control at the top of this food chain, it is at a point that Postmasters are an overpaid Clerk, either that or we are underpaid.

agreeable and grievances were sent up, however he had the authority to resolve these issues and occasionally is was resolved.

Pro-Union is not a dirty word to be joked about, people's jobs are at stake, a lot of good has come from our efforts and there is plenty of room for more good but it is vital that you help, contact your Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor the Postal Service Protection Act (H. R. 630 in the House/S. 316 in the Senate) and Protect Overnight Delivery Act (H.R. 2459).

The point of this article is that today's Postmaster is a bad photocopy of yesterday's Postmaster. They weren't all good then either and many were disciplined or forced into retirement for their actions towards APWU members but today's Postmaster is a faded, blurry, copy. Untrained, indifferent, and powerless to handle our contract let alone order toilet paper.

## DEADLINE

The deadline for articles for the July-August issue of the *Michigan Messenger* is September 27th





by John  
Smeekens,  
Veterans  
Director

## Veteran's Report

# Stolen Valor: Now Law

President Obama has signed into effect the Stolen Valor Act. The Act amends the federal criminal code to rewrite provisions relating to fraudulent claims about military service. Violators are subject to a fine, imprisonment for not more than one year, or both, an individual who, with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, fraudulently holds himself or herself out to be a recipient of one or more of the following decorations: the Congressional Medal of Honor; Distinguished-service Cross; Navy Cross; Air Force Cross; Silver Star; Purple Heart; Combat Infantryman's Badge; Combat Action Badge; Combat Medical Badge; Combat Action Ribbon; Combat Action Medal; or any replacement or duplicate medal for such medal as authorized by law. The new law is narrower, making it a crime to lie about being decorated with the intent to profit personally or financially. That could include those who claim medals in order to receive veterans benefits, land a government contract or get a job reserved for veterans. Violators could face up to a year in prison.

### Great!!!

Ruth Johnson, our Secretary of State, recently announced her support for establishing special identification cards that would give the state's 670,000 military Veterans discounts on stores, hotels, and other benefits. Placing the special designation on driver's licenses and I. D. cards would make it easier on Veterans, who currently must carry discharge papers to prove their service. The Veterans' identification plan was recently introduced in a bill by lawmakers, and Johnson said her office will work with them to see that it is written into law. Oh, it passed and should go into effect soon. While Michigan has the nation's 11th highest population of Veterans, the state ranks dead last in federal money spent per person on services provided through the VA, including medical treatment and employment assistance.

### Overtime Increase

As part of its ongoing effort to accelerate the elimination of the disability compensation claims backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it is mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices. This surge, which will be implemented through the end of fiscal year 2013, will be targeted to eliminating the backlogged status of claims. The additional overtime hours that will be worked during this period will be used

to help eliminate the backlog with continued emphasis on high-priority claims for homeless Veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and Veterans filing Fully Developed Claims. This is the latest effort to reduce the backlog. The VA announced an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited one year or longer. The VA has begun prioritizing claims decisions for Veterans who have been waiting the longest, by providing provisional decisions that allow eligible Veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits quickly. With a provisional decision, a Veteran has a year to submit additional information to support a claim before the decision becomes final. Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES).

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal eBenefits at <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>.

### Burn Pit Registry

The VA is asking for public comment on a planned registry of military members potentially exposed to open-air burn pit toxins from our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the from the first Gulf War. To establish its "Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry," the VA is required to solicit public comment on the proposed collection of information for the index. According to a VA press the registry will include a web-based questionnaire for troops and veterans to report health concerns and exposures. The 2012 Dignified Burial and Veterans Benefits Improvement Act required the VA to establish a burn-pit registry by January 2014. Read more at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/06/05/2013-13224/proposed-information-collection-open-burn-pit-registry-airborne-hazard-self-assessment-questionnaire>.

### Grand Rapids Veterans Home; Investigation Needed

House Democratic colleagues held a press conference last week calling for an investigation into the quality of health care provided at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans. Specifically, they want the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to investigate conditions at the home and the Michigan Civil Service Commission to reconsider their April 2 decision allowing privati-

zation of jobs at the veteran's home, as the decision only took cost-cutting into consideration, but not the quality of care. Following the decision, 144 jobs were privatized, and many veterans at the home have said that the quality of care has been slipping ever since. During a recent visit to the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans, 15 veterans and four staffers talked about the quality of care at the home and their concerns with high turnover among staff and fewer caretakers per veteran after privatizing services. VETERANS have a right to expect better than this, and frankly, we should be demanding nothing but the best for them.

Those 144 workers are AFSCME brothers and sisters. AFSCME took the fight to court and to the Civil Service Commission. The decision to allow privatization was made by the Snyder Administration and affirmed on a 2 to 2 vote of the Civil Service Commission. Commissioners Barrett and Wardrop found that quality was not the concern of the Commission – only cost. If that's what their rules say, those rules should be changed. Let the Governor and the members of the Civil Service Commission know what you think by sending them a message to their email addresses: **Governor Rick Snyder: [governorsoffice@michigan.gov](mailto:governorsoffice@michigan.gov)** and **Commissioner Thomas Wardrop: [CivilServiceCommission@michigan.gov](mailto:CivilServiceCommission@michigan.gov)**

### Vietnam MIA Recovered

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Spc. 5 John L. Burgess, 21, of Sutton Bay, Mich. On June 30, 1970, while on a command

and control mission, a UH-1H Iroquois helicopter was struck by enemy fire and crashed in Binh Phuoc Province, South Vietnam. Of the five-man crew, only one survived the crash. Welcome Home Brother!

### Something New, For Me

Well I did it. By the time you read this article, I should have retired on August 02, 2013 after spending 33 years and 3 months working for the U. S. P. S. I started out as a mail handler at the Pioneer Building in Warren, was on the transfer team to the new plant on Bellingham in Troy, and then I even did a stint as a letter carrier in Mt. Clemens for several months. Eventually I found my home at the Royal Oak Vehicle Maintenance Facility on 11 Mile Rd and Washington in Downtown Royal Oak. But I'm not going to disappear. I'm staying on as a full time union member, and hoping that the board, and the MPWU membership, will allow me to continue being the **State's Veterans' Director**. I enjoy helping get information for our Veterans' and their families and/or spouses, and I also enjoy putting out this bi-monthly article, hoping it will get some good, and deserved benefit information to some of our Veterans. Yeah, I'll still show up at Conferences and Conventions, to spread the word and hand out copies of important benefit information for you to spread out to all Veterans' regardless of where they work, or who they work for. I'm not saying goodbye, but I'll be seeing you around. Thanks for all your support over the years, and to all my Brother and Sister Veterans, Thanks for your Service to our great country, and Welcome Home!

## — Current Issues —

*continued from page 4*

locally. All bid duty assignments have to be titled with agreed upon Standard Position Descriptions found in the EL-201.

Beware that management may attempt to combine duties from different crafts to create an assignment. The provisions of Article 7.2 must be strictly enforced. Normally work in different crafts, occupational groups or levels will not be combined into one job. If you have any concerns about job posting it is best to call your NBAs in Chicago. A clerk craft duty assignment should never be awarded to an employee in different craft unless it is in an official duty assignment which is posted multicraft per the EL-201.

### PSE TRAVEL TIME

PSEs are entitled to travel time. A PSE can be used in accordance with the Hub Clerk MOU and have contractual rights per Article 36 of the CBA. In some Districts management has now taken the position that they do not have to pay the PSEs travel time.

*"Leadership is an opportunity to serve. It is not a trumpet call to self-importance."*

— A quote by Donald Walters  
*"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it."*

— A quote by Maya Angelou  
And with those words of wisdom, enjoy the remainder of the summer!!!  
Yours in Union Solidarity.  
Until next time.

# The PMG's Five-Year Plan Threatens Our Jobs And Benefits

by Brian Lewis, APWU Local 183

The Postmaster General's newest brainstorm is a "Five-Year Plan" that he claims will restore the Postal Service to fiscal solvency. As one might expect, it would be at the expense of Postal workers and ordinary customers who depend on us for speedy reliable service.

One part of his scheme is to eliminate 146 thousand jobs. That is about one-quarter of the Postal workforce. One can be assured that the people that are to be eliminated will be those who actually do productive work, not the drones in Statistical Programs or the nit-pickers who lose sleep worrying about visible tape in the PO lobbies. We will always have enough money to maintain their positions. After all, isn't that more important than moving the mail? **THOSE ARE OUR JOBS THAT THEY WANT TO ELIMINATE!**

Another part of his plan is to take the Postal Service out of the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program and put us into new plan that is just for the Post Office. There is absolutely no guarantee that this new program will be anywhere as good as our present health plan. The FEHBP has served us well for decades and there is no valid reason to change it. The PMG claims that the Postal Service can save \$8 billion a year under his proposal. \$6 billion of the savings comes from sidestepping the prefunding requirement and the other \$2 billion is pure fantasy or, more likely, reduced benefits. I can't imagine that he will be able to convince health-care providers to reduce their charges in order to help the Post Office save money. At any rate, it's a non-starter because the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 bars any reduction in benefits from those prevailing un-

der the old, pre-1970, Post Office Department. He would have to get Congress to change the law and that would be a hard sell in the Senate.

A third part of the Five-Year Plan is to increase alternate access. That's a fancy way of saying that customers should mail at the corner coffee shop or drug store where well-trained, experienced high school dropouts will attend to theft mailing needs. It takes years to train and develop a good Window Clerk, but Mr. Donahoe seems to think the floating labor that is characteristic of the retail industry would be able to do the job. I suspect the real motivation is that retail workers tend to be non-union and grossly underpaid with few, if any, benefits, thereby saving the Postal service tons of money. Tens of thousands of Window jobs are threatened by this ill-advised scheme. Another part of alternate access is on-line payment of postage. Mailers receive a big discount for putting on as little postage as they think they can get away with. There doesn't seem to be any serious effort to check for accuracy, especially when it's picked up by the carriers. Perhaps the Postal Service is afraid that ensuring the correct payment of postage might discourage on-line postage payment and send the mailers back to the PO window.

Yet another part of the Plan is to close more plants with an accompanying reduction in service standards. Apparently, three days to get a letter from Buffalo to Cleveland (a four hour drive) is way too speedy. First-Class Mail was often faster fifty years ago when they sorted it on the trains. This reduction in service will cost jobs and drive away more mailers, just as the PMG and the Board of Governors seem to want. A cynic might wonder if they are doing this deliberately in order to make the Post Office look so bad that there be a public outcry for privatization.

As if these reductions aren't enough, the plan is to go to five-day delivery and eliminate door and curbside delivery by installing cluster boxes down at the end of the street so great-grandmother can hobble down to the corner with her walker in three feet of snow during a typical Buffalo winter.

The PMG makes a big deal about the increase in parcel volume. The problem here is that most of Parcel Select and Parcel Select Return Service where most of the actual work is done by minimum-wage workers in near sweatshop conditions, not by unionized Postal Workers. The stuff comes in on pallets piled higher than the Empire State Building but leaning like the Tower of Pisa, only less stable. Did you ever see the parcels that are crushed on the bottom of the stack? Just hope that nothing addressed to you is down there.

The Postal Service is so proud of the new seven-year contract with Federal Express to fly our Priority Mail and some of our First Class on their planes. This puts our most important mail services at the mercy of a competitor that would like nothing better than to put us out of business. There is absolutely no reason why the Postal Service can't fly its own airplanes. Then we would have complete control over our services with the ability to actually improve service standards.

Fortunately, The PMG cannot implement his Five-Year Plan unilaterally; he needs to get Congress to change the laws to achieve his goals. Unfortunately, Darrell Issa and his Committee are still there, waiting for an opportunity to wreck the Postal Service and send us into the ranks of the unemployed. Stay tuned.

— reprinted from the  
*Voice of Western New York*

## Voluntary Benefits Plan

**GROUP LEGAL PLAN OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD!  
ONLY THROUGH August 31st**

One of the most eagerly awaited events for APWU members is about to arrive — the Open Enrollment Period for the Group Legal Plan! **The Open Enrollment period will be available until August 31st, 2013.**

Open Enrollment Periods for the Group Legal Plan are not scheduled at regular intervals in the same manner as your Health Plans. They are not even necessarily scheduled for each year. This makes it imperative that any APWU member interested in this benefit should enroll immediately and we are asking for your help in getting the word out that now is the time to act!

Limited enrollment periods are necessary so that the plan can continue to provide the same comprehensive, high level of benefits for years to come at the lowest possible cost. Members enrolled in the Group Legal Services Plan can receive legal services worth thousands of dollars from our extensive nationwide panel of dedicated, competent attorneys.

Consider what any of the covered services would cost you out of pocket. Buying or selling a house? Getting a divorce? Adopting a child? Being sued by a neighbor? Getting a Will written?

At just \$7.75 per bi-weekly pay period, just under **56¢ per day**, the Group Legal Services Plan remains the most comprehensive and affordable program of its kind in the country. Members who have previously submitted an application form will be enrolled in the program immediately and will be individually notified.

**Call Toll-Free To Enroll: 1-877-229-0451**  
**Don't miss this limited opportunity!**  
**www.VoluntaryBenefitsPlan.com**

## A Poem For Detroit

by Paul Felton

I'm going to tell to you a story  
The details are a little gory  
Detroiters are under attack  
They're trying to stab us in the back  
Our problems they want to correct  
By ignoring those who we elect  
And in so doing, I might note  
Make meaningless our right to vote  
They're saying that we are bankrupt  
Yet their solutions are corrupt  
They give the wealthy a sweet deal  
And invent new ways to try to steal  
From working people and the poor  
This travesty we can't endure  
Our seniors now all feel the tension  
As Orr & friends attack their pension

While from contractors and the banks  
Orr will receive their grateful thanks  
Remember when these banks got bailed  
Out when they should've really been jailed  
From so many homes they do evict  
Hard working people who are kicked  
Out with no help, it's a damn disgrace  
And further erodes our tax base  
The wealth flows to them that's got  
Squeezing even more those who do not  
The only way to make this right  
Is get together, stand and fight  
And as for the E.M., Mr. Orr  
It's time that we showed him the door!





# Detroit Bankruptcy Takes Aim At Pensions

by Jane Slaughter

Detroit hit the Trifecta yesterday—the third in a series of body blows that politicians have landed on the city’s working people. The Michigan legislature passed “right-to-work” in December and gave the governor the right to impose “emergency managers” on cities two days later. When Detroit’s emergency manager Kevyn Orr announced Chapter 9 bankruptcy Thursday, he was following a predicted trajectory that will lead to further impoverishment and privatization.

The bankruptcy will enable an appointed judge to impose further cuts to city expenses and to void union contracts. A prime target for cost-cutting is the pensions owed to 21,000 city retirees and 9,000 active workers. The city estimates its pensions are underfunded by \$3.5 billion, and wants to reduce payments to both workers and the bondholders who have lent the city money over the years: equality of sacrifice.

Michael Mulholland, vice president of the city’s largest AFSCME local, said city workers are “in a state of somewhere between perplexing and total anger. Everything they’ve been promised, both contractually and kind of a social contract, is being pulled out from under them. It’s morally indefensible.”

Mulholland retired in February, after 29 and a half years in the Water Department. “I could have worked someplace else and made more money,” he said, “but I was told if I worked here I’d have a steady job and in my old age not be in poverty.”

The bankruptcy of Detroit, which now has fewer than 700,000 residents, is the largest city bankruptcy in U.S. history.

Orr sprung the hurry-up filing yesterday because union pension fund attorneys were scheduled to be in court on Monday, arguing for an injunction against bankruptcy.

The state constitution appears to protect public employee pensions: “The accrued financial benefits of each pension plan and retirement system of the state and its political subdivisions shall be a contractual obligation thereof and shall not be diminished or impaired thereby.”

But proponents of making city workers bite the bullet note that bankruptcy judges have wide latitude to break contracts.

### Tag-Teaming with the Governor and the Banks

Pundits said other states and cities would look to Detroit as a template for how to manage ailing city budgets. A



On July 19th the Pontchartrain Hotel reopened non-union under new management as the Crowne Plaza. It is the closest hotel to Cobo Hall. Detroit’s labor movement mobilized several pickets during the day.

recent law in Rhode Island specifies that in a city bankruptcy, bondholders must be paid first, before pensioners.

Asked if the Michigan legislature could pass a similar law, Mulholland laughed. “If they proposed a law that Detroiters should all be shot,” he said, “some of them would get up at midnight to sign that one.” Governor Rick Snyder has guided the process of putting Detroit through a “consent decree,” Orr’s rule, and now the bankruptcy.

The Republican-dominated legislature has long been hostile to majority-black Detroit. In November 2012, the state’s voters passed a referendum that threw out a previous “emergency manager” law, which had been used almost exclusively to take over majority-black cities and school districts. A few weeks later the legislature simply passed the law again.

Although the law requires negotiations with affected parties before a city files for bankruptcy, Mulholland, who was in the talks, said, “It wasn’t negotiations, it was PowerPoint presentations about how bad the situation is.”

“Orr wouldn’t answer AFSCME’s requests for negotiations, so they went and taped a letter to the door of his office.”

As an AFSCME member who had reached the top of the pay scale, Mul-

holland’s pension is \$1,600 a month before health care contributions are taken out. He said exactly how much Orr intends to take from retirees has always been left vague, though union leaders were told health care would be slashed.

Two years ago, he said, city officials encouraged workers to retire right away. Now active workers are told to “relax, we’re going after the retirees.”

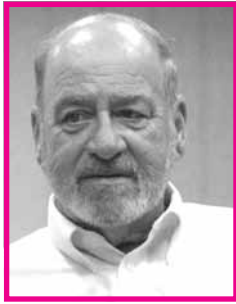
Orr touts the bankruptcy as a way to improve city services—which often, in the world he comes from, is

code for privatization. Water, garbage pickup, an island park called Belle Isle, and the Detroit Institute of the Arts have all been mentioned as potential saleable items. “The only thing they’re going to ‘improve’ is somebody’s bottom line,” Mulholland predicted.

General Motors, which is headquartered downtown, said it wouldn’t be affected by the bankruptcy. Apparently, with Snyder—who ran on his record as a businessman—in charge, business is going to be just fine.

— reprinted from *Labor Notes*





by Al LaBrecque, Retiree's Chapter President

## Retiree Involvement

# Updates And Information

*"Late to bed, early to rise; fight like Hell, and Organize!"* (Old Labor slogan appropriate in 2013)

**BACK IN THE SADDLE** – I'm honored to have been tapped by MPWU Dir. Research & Education, Lucy Morton, to conduct a "How to Write a Resolution" class at the Area 10, 11, & 12 District Meeting in Escanaba, Oct. 11 & 12. Resolutions are my 'cup of tea', so to speak. Resolutions, especially those proposing amendments to State or National Constitutions requiring a 2/3 vote to adopt, are the heart and soul of a Union convention. Without resolutions to debate and consider, all that's left are speeches and reports.

Concerns are that Resolutions writing is becoming a lost art. I'm looking forward to instructing the "What, Why, How, & Who" of constructing a comprehensive resolution. We will also touch on delegates assigned to convention Resolutions Committees. Resolutions are all too often either non-concurred or modified beyond recognition or intent of the maker by well-meaning Committee members who generally bypass the "Why" of the 'Whereas'. Every Local and State officer and potential convention delegates can profit from this class. I'm gratified to be a bridge between past experience to this generation of MPWU Local and State Union leadership.

**POWER OF RESOLUTIONS** – While on the subject of Resolutions; as a delegate to more State and National Conventions than I care to admit; I became known for sheer volume and passionate debate on resolutions I authored, earning friendly jabs for those efforts. Of all the many resolutions I authored in my 33-year Local Union tenure; one stands out in my memory. Retirees of my era may recall the APWU slogan; "APWU YES! EI/QWL NO!"

In the '80's, postal management was selling the "team" concept labeled; "Employee Involvement/Quality of Worklife" to its Unions. It sounded good and Sister postal unions succumbed to its siren song. As a Local officer weary of the Labor-Management wars, I turned to my UAW pioneer Dad for his views. Dad, in his wisdom, advised I consult his lifelong pal; '36-'37 Flint Fisher Body #1 Sit-down Strike leader, Bud Simons, who I'd known from early childhood. Mr. Simons listened to the USPS pitch for EI/QWL and said; "It sounds like a company union wrapped in a pretty package." That revelation, along with some sage advice, prompted me to compose a Resolution to establish the official APWU position opposing EI/QWL which was ultimately overwhelmingly adopted by the 1984 National Convention in Las Vegas.

APWU took a lot of criticism locally and nationally for our position opposing EI/QWL from both USPS management and Sister postal unions who had bought in lock, stock, and barrel. In the long-term, we were proven correct. The point being; a Resolution submitted by the Flint Area Local, approved by the MPWU Convention, and adopted by the '84 APWU National Convention, established that (now) historic stance. The EI/QWL issue may be obscure to this generation of APWU members, but it defined the course of our Union, and demonstrates the importance of writing, submitting,

and supporting the ideas you want to convey through the power of a Resolution. More recent examples are the Resolutions amending the APWU Constitution to elect, rather than appoint, our Retirees' Dept. Director, and eligibility of our estimated 40,000 Retirees' Dept. members to vote for our top three national officers and resident department directors, of which I'm equally proud to have authored. See you in class in Escanaba!

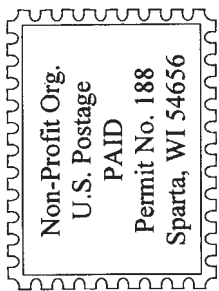
**MEDICARE & DIABETICS** – If you are a diabetic patient you may have recently found a change in how to purchase insulin syringes. I used to get a script for a 90-day supply from the pharmacy. No more! The doctor used to call it in to the pharmacy. No more! Now, I have to hand-carry the prescription and am limited to a 30-day supply. You can't order syringes through former mail order suppliers, but can only purchase them from a Medicare approved provider, the same as for a glucose meter and strips. It's an inconvenience at worst. Lately, I've seen TV ads announcing a couple of large companies that are now Medicare approved mail order suppliers. Smacks of a monopoly to me!

**LEGISLATION** – That's where it's at today, for active and retired postal workers. Just as this is being written, APWU President Guffey was testifying before the House Committee chaired by the (hateful) Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) on H.R. 630; The Postal Protection Act of 2013. Both our Michigan U.S. Senators; Carl Levin (D), and Debbie Stabenow (D) are S.316 cosponsors. To date, 3 Michigan Congressmen; Dan Kildee (D-5th), Sander Levin (D-9th), and Gary Peters (D-14th) are signed on to H.R.630. The lack of meaningful consideration of this critical legislation in both Houses is irresponsible!

To her credit, Michigan Senator, Debbie Stabenow (D), immediately responded to my letter objecting to the "chained CPI" proposals in the GOP, and deeply disappointingly, the President's budgets, completely agreeing with the APWU position. Instead of lamenting this "do nothing" Congress, we all have an obligation to ramp up holding Members of Congress feet to the fire on the Postal Protection Act, the "chained CPI", and threats to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and to our FEHBP health insurance benefit.

It's not just my job, or that of APWU leadership from Local, or State, or national levels, to carry the ball on our legislative issues, but YOURS . . . active and retired members to continue to write, call, e-mail, and visit the district offices of our elected legislators. Failure to act will result in lighter pocketbooks for all of us!

Be Strong!



Return to APWU/MPWU  
c/o Paul Felton, Editor  
P.O. Box 361342  
Grosse Pointe, MI 48236  
Address Service Requested

