

# Michigan

## MESSENGER

APWU  
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## Outgoing President

# A New Challenge



by John  
Marcotte

The Editor is publishing one final article on Page 1 by John Marcotte, who is now the national APWU Legislative/Political Director. Congratulations to John on his election, and we look forward to working with him and national APWU President Mark Dimondstein as our union fights to save our jobs and the public's mail service.

The District meeting in Escanaba was a resounding success. The training was excellent and I want to especially thank Assistant Director A Idowu Balogun for making the arduous trip to the U.P. via a long midnight car ride from Green Bay, Wisconsin. Idowu wanted me to inform you that it was a pleasure to be in Michigan and to quote him "I'll be back." Many thanks to our host the 498-499 SCF Local for all their help and support. As always Lucy Morton assembled a first class education agenda including all three clerk craft NBA's and

Michigan retiree Director Al LaBreque. Al has a long string of successful resolutions at national convention and imparted that knowledge on a new group of member activists. Congratulations to Al for his election as the Central Region delegate to national convention.

***"The future of our union, our retirees and the Postal Service will be determined by Congress. There is no way to sugar coat the severity of our situation."***

While on the subject of congratulations I want to give my warmest welcome and congratulations to Jesus Gonzales. I have every confidence that Michigan is in good hands. I would also like to congratulate all the nominees to fill the presidential vacancy with the MPWU. All of them are great unionists and I thank them for being willing to step up and help out the state.

The future of our union, our retirees and the Postal Service will be determined by Congress. There is no way to sugar coat the severity of our situation. However, I believe in dire situations there is great opportunity. Traveling all over the country recently I have learned

our members are ready for action and they want to fight for a public universal service post office. Defending a public institution that serves every American six days a week regardless of income level, location or social status is a noble cause. Providing middle class jobs to veterans, women and minorities is worth defending. I believe with the proper training and assistance our union will rise as one and

secure a bright future for postal workers. We have no other option but surrender and unionists never surrender.

I would like to close by saying what a privilege and honor it has been to serve the postal workers of Michigan as your President. To be able to work hand in hand with the wonderful, motivated locals that make up the MPWU was a pleasure. I will say it was bittersweet to write my resignation as your President but I am excited and thrilled to take on the challenges of my new position. I promise to continue to serve you and all of our brothers and sisters to the best of my ability and to fight for you every day. Thank you for the joy of serving you as your President and for your strong support.

As we enter into the holiday season I wish each and every one of you Happy Holidays and remember I am still only a phone call away.

Yours in Solidarity and Friendship.

## Installation Of National Officers



Installation ceremony for national APWU officers.



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by Paul Felton, Editor

## Editor's Report

# The Road Ahead

In my last article, I wrote the following. "Postal unions have a unique advantage in the battle to save our jobs, our lifestyle, and the quality of service we provide. That advantage – our members. Not that our members are so different from the members of other unions. Our advantage is that we are everywhere – in every big city and small town, in every state in every community in the country. We need to turn our members into an army of organizers. Not just to mail postcards to our Congressman, but to spread the word throughout the communities in which we live and work."

I also wrote about the need to have mass demonstrations, like the carriers did earlier this year. Or like several unions did a few years ago when we had simultaneous rallies in every congressional district. I wrote that I don't understand why the four postal unions haven't come out with such a call already.

At the time I wrote that article we were in the middle of union elections. I didn't feel it appropriate to discuss the candi-

dates. Now that the elections are over I can report that we elected a new national president who shares my viewpoint on this subject. Mark Dimondstein is committed to mobilizing the membership for the fight ahead. The fight to save the Postal Service from congressional attack and from attack by our own management, is more important than any grievance.

It could be a parent teacher organization. It could be a church group. It could be a group of friends you play cards with. It could be a reading group. It could be some folks you see regularly at your favorite drinking establishment.

I could go on with more examples but you get the idea. We need more than a lobbying effort. We need a movement. Building that movement takes total involvement. And under our new national leadership building that movement will be the top priority.

When I was young I witnessed a movement that changed history. I'm referring to the civil rights movement. We need a movement today of the same magnitude. The civil rights movement consisted of a whole lot more than a few famous leaders whose names we all know. Thousands of people were involved in that struggle.

The road ahead will not be easy. But if we build the kind of movement that I am talking about, we will not only save our jobs, but we will save a vital service to the American public. And future generations will be grateful for our efforts.

*"We need to work together with the other postal unions to have any chance of success."*

Every postal worker has a role to play in this battle.

We need to work together with the other postal unions to have any chance of success. That means we should give enthusiastic support to the letter carriers in their struggle to maintain six-day delivery. Only then can we expect their support in our struggle to stop plant closings maintain the service standards.

At the same time we need to reach out to veterans' groups, civil rights groups and other potential allies in our struggle. We need our members to reach out to any groups that you belong to. It could be a block club or neighborhood organization.

## NBA Report

# Transfers



by Michael O'Hearn, National Business Agent

Lately, quite a few members have been asking me about transfers. You can find the regulations and rules about transfers in our contract on pages 338 to 342. Any employee can request a transfer on the internet. Go on the website [liteblue.usps.gov](http://liteblue.usps.gov) and search the site for e-reassign. Here you can find vacancies. Please recognize that management will review your records. They will take into consideration your work, attendance, and safety records. Your attendance record is of particular importance. Evaluations of both the gaining and losing installation heads must be fair. EEO factors may be considered. You must meet the minimum qualifications for the position you are requesting. For transfers within the District or adjacent Districts, you must have served at least eighteen months in your present installation. For transfers outside this area, the restriction is one year in your present installation. If you transfer within your District or adjacent

District, you must stay in your new installation at least eighteen months unless released earlier by the installation head. If you transfer outside this area, you must stay in your new installation at least one year unless released earlier by the installation head. There are some exceptions to these rules that you can read in the Transfer Memo mentioned above. The transfer reporting date is between 30 and 90 days. The exact date is to be arranged by agreement between the gaining and losing installation heads.

Now, for some practical matters, never believe what you are told by the gaining Postmaster. I have received numerous complaints from transferees that Postmasters did not honor promises made before the transfer. Promises include such things as the number of hours a PTF will work each week. Also, promises about your days off, your starting times, and jobs you will be doing. Always check beforehand with the bargaining unit employees in the office you are going. Ask for

their evaluation of the Postmaster and Supervisors in your new office before transferring. Ask what job you are possibly going to fill. What hours are needed in the office? Get the lowdown from the people working in the office. This is very important since you will be locked into this new office for eighteen months or one year as reported above.

### Happy Holidays

Often times we are all caught up in our daily worries and concerns as if we have blinders on. We seem oblivious to those around us. In our rush to take care of the task at hand, we sometimes neglect to let our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers that we care about them and wish them well. With the holidays approaching, this is especially true.

Therefore, I want to take this time to wish all my union sisters and brothers a very Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. May you enjoy good health, prosperity, and happiness.

## New MPWU President



by Jesus M.  
Gonzales

# The Political Stranglehold

*Note: as part of the transition. Jesus wrote a legislative piece while John Marcotte wrote one last President's article.*

Brothers and Sisters, we are in the midst of the unknown again on Postal Reform legislation. Countless energy has gone into a political stranglehold to re-invent the US Postal Service. In the political sphere of compromise when it comes to what this organization needs, many Congressional leaders have balked, or just abstained regarding our relentless push on passing critical reform "repealing the PAEA of 2006" to stop this unnecessary financial burden to prefund retiree health benefit' for future employees.

We need to ask this question of our Congressional Leaders. If prefunding is so great, why hasn't Congress imposed this regulatory reform on Corporate America? Should this not be an industry standard to safeguard the American taxpayer against corporate failures?

These questions need to be asked! Our future and the future of APWU members yet to come will have to feel the impact of the burdensome legislation. Congress must reform the PAEA of 2006, or repeal it. Our national treasure is at stake, and the future of this industry we support will be forced to use other forms of communication and/or delivery methods if this law is not amended or repealed.

### Saving Social Security

"Social Security is the most successful and effective income security program in our nation's history." Nearly 80 years after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that it would provide "protection against the hazards and vicissitudes of life," Social Security now insures 90 percent of all Americans against loss of income. Social Security keeps millions of Americans out of poverty and provides all Americans with the peace of mind that they will not become destitute if their family loses its primary source of income due to retirement, disability, or death.

Conservative politicians and outspoken "one-percenters" are on a mission to convince young people that Social Security amounts to "generational theft." If the claim that America's senior citizens are engaged in a nefarious plot to steal from their grandchildren sounds implausible, that's because it is. Just like the millions of seniors today who benefit from Social Security, millions of young Americans also benefit from the program and millions more will rely on it in the future when they are no longer able to work.

We can't afford to sit by and let these attacks continue. Here are five reasons we should fight to strengthen — not cut — Social Security.

1. Due to a failing private retirement system, many people lack other alternatives. The increasingly inadequate private retirement system could mean that Social Security is the only source of income for many when they become too old to work.

2. There are millions of young people who will rely on it; Social Security is a stable, self-funded program that will last indefinitely — unless politicians manage to convince us to get rid of it. Social Security is funded by a specific payroll tax paid by workers and employers, and it will continue to function as long as we do nothing to change it.

3. Conservatives make it sound as if only the elderly benefit from Social Security, but the truth is that nearly one-third of Social Security beneficiaries are not retirees. Social Security provides benefits to 4.4 million children whose parents are disabled, retired, or deceased—making it the largest provider of benefits to children of any social program.

4. Social Security keeps 14 million elderly Americans out of poverty, and two-thirds of elderly beneficiaries rely on Social Security for the majority of their income. Without Social Security, nearly half of elderly Americans would live below the poverty line; instead, fewer than 10 percent do. And Social Security retirement income is very modest. With an

average retirement benefit of about \$1,269 per month, or about \$15,000 annually, most retirees are not exactly living high on the hog.

5. The Center for American Progress has shown that we can invest in young people, strengthen the middle class, ensure the long-term solvency of Social Security, and balance the budget. These goals are not mutually exclusive.

Conservatives would have us believe that if only we weren't spending so much money on old people, we could spend all that money on things that would benefit young people. But when these same politicians write budgets that slash spending on seniors, they don't put those "savings" toward young people.

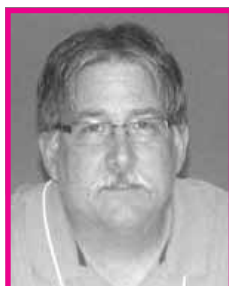
The most recent Republican House budget makes debilitating cuts to seniors' health care, but it also reduces Pell Grants that help low-income students pay for college, cuts the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that keeps millions of young families out of poverty, and eliminates the federal guarantee that makes it possible for young people to become homeowners. At the same time, the budget would create trillions of dollars in tax breaks for the rich.

They want to cut spending on middle-class Americans of all ages in order to subsidize massive tax cuts for the richest 1 percent of Americans, which is exactly what the Republican

House did in its recent budget.

Young people are not struggling today because our government is spending too much money on Social Security for our grandparents. Young Americans are struggling because the economy is growing too slowly and creating too few jobs, leading to double-digit unemployment rates for workers under age 25, many of whom are already saddled with crippling student-loan debt. We desperately need policies that invest in job creation and economic opportunities for our generation. Instead, young people get lawmakers who are fixated on austerity at the expense of economic growth and monied interests peddling the same stale scare tactics invented by the Republicans who tried to thwart Social Security's creation in 1935. Conservatives have claimed for years that America's bedrock social insurance contract is putting us on the brink of economic disaster and that the only way to stave off the impending catastrophe is to cut benefits and privatize the program. This is what they are really saying: "Wage earners, you will pay and pay in taxes . . . and when you are very old, you will have an I.O.U. which the U.S. Government may make good on if it is still solvent."

We must stay mindful to what has happened to us in the past, with the PAEA of 2006, and stay focused on how we need to keep our Congressional Leaders accountable for taking steps that may undo our future, retirement, and benefits.



by Ron  
Brown,  
Area 10  
Director

## Area 10 Director

# Mud Slinging

sat on his/her rear end for their whole term but if they did then I'm sure the membership would be aware and vote appropriately at the next election; that goes for those elected officials that sit in Washington DC also. I don't need the candidate's opinion; I just need to know

what makes you think YOU are qualified for the position and what will you try to do if elected. Let's keep this in mind for the next election and every election and if you are thinking about running for an office — just stick to the facts. Yours in solidarity.

The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

Battle Creek	480-481	Ludington	Stevensville
Central MI	498-499	Muskegon	Traverse City
Cheboygan	Gaylord	Roger City	Troy Local
Detroit District	Great Lakes Area	486-487	Western MI
Farmington	Mail Handlers	Sault Ste Marie	
Flint	Jackson	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.

First I would like to congratulate all the newly elected candidates and say Thank You for your service, support and dedication to those that did not win. I was going to submit this in the last newsletter but did not want anybody to think that I was trying to sway any votes. That being said, I was very disappointed when I read the candidates' statements as to why they thought they deserved to represent the American Postal Workers Union and then have them BASH their opponents as to why they did this or why they didn't do that and therefore you should not vote for them. It really frustrates me when I read this stuff because I don't know if it's true or not. Who is telling the truth? I was told once by a close friend of mine that there are three sides to every story . . . My side, your side and the TRUTH. Now I don't know if Joe Candidate

## Veterans' Report



by John  
Smeekens,  
Veterans  
Director

### Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas to you and your family. I hope it is a blessed, and safe one for you and yours. Keep safe, don't drink and drive, eat lightly, so you don't have to make up some crazy News Years resolution that you're going to exercise and lose weight. And don't forget our troops. Say a prayer, or whatever you do, for them and their families.

### Happy New Year

Happy New Year to one and all. Ditto on the words above about being safe and not drinking and driving and those resolutions that are so far out of reach that you can't keep them. Keep our troops and their families in your prayers and thoughts.

### Women Veterans' Hotline

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new hotline — **1-855-VA-WOMEN** — to receive and respond to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans. Women Veterans are entitled to apply for the same benefits as their male counterparts, which include health care and pharmacy benefits as well as education benefits, disability compensation, home loans, employment assistance and more. The hotline (1-855-VA-WOMEN) joins numerous other VA hotlines that provide critical information and assistance to Veterans, such as those for Veterans in crisis and in danger of becoming homeless. Veterans can also receive information and apply for benefits online at VA's <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>

and manage their health care at [MyHealthVet.va.gov](http://MyHealthVet.va.gov).

### Lady Veteran Update

As of February 2013, there have been nearly 300,000 Women deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. 152 Women have been killed in action while 946 Women have been wounded in action. If you know of one of these wounded Warrior Women Veterans, please let them know that they are entitled to VA benefits, just like their male counterparts. There are numerous benefits available to them.

### Camp Lejeune

I know that some of you are probably wondering why I keep bringing up the Camp Lejeune water problem, but we've got to get the word out to all of those Marines, and their families who were stationed there, who may have had contact with the water in the camp area and housing. Did you serve at Camp Lejeune for 30 or more days between 1957 and 1987? The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published a proposed regulation Sept. 11, 2013 that discusses how it will improve health care for eligible veterans with 1 of 15 conditions. Learn more at the VA website.

### VA & the New ACA

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an awareness campaign and a new website, [www.va.gov/aca](http://www.va.gov/aca), to let Veterans know what the Affordable Care Act means for them and their families. Veterans receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see no change in their benefits or out-of-pocket costs when portions of the Affordable Care Act take effect next year. If you are enrolled in VA health care, you do not need to take any ad-

ditional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. Veterans can apply for VA health care at any time by visiting [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll), calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting their local VA health care facility. Full details on eligibility are available at [www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book\\_CHECK FOR ELIGIBILITY](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book_CHECK_FOR_ELIGIBILITY)

VA's health care system for Veterans has no enrollment fee, no monthly premiums and no deductibles. Most Veterans also have no out-of-pocket costs, though some may have small copayments for some health care or prescription drugs. For information about VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, VA encourages Veterans and family members to visit the new website at [www.va.gov/aca](http://www.va.gov/aca), or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Eastern time. The new website includes a Health Benefits Explorer, where Veterans can learn about the benefits they can receive if they enroll in VA care.

### Support Advanced Appropriations

VA healthcare was unaffected by the recent government shutdown because the VFW was able to get advance appropriations for the Veterans Health Administration signed into law in 2009, but the shutdown exposed a serious flaw in the VA's ability to properly care for those who depend on the programs and services provided by the Veterans Benefits Administration. That's why so many Veterans Organizations support the "Putting Veterans Funding First Act" which would provide advance appropriations for all VA accounts, which would protect VA and all its beneficiaries from future government shutdowns. The 16-day shutdown temporarily closed 56 VA

Regional Offices, preventing veterans and survivors from contacting the VA about new or existing claims. It caused the furlough of more than 7,000 VA employees who had been working hard to reduce the claims backlog, and the shutdown threatened the November payment of benefits to more than 5 million disabled veterans, widows and student-veterans, among other impacts. Those VBA programs, services and operations make up only 14 percent of VA's total budget, but the impact of not having that funding — or not knowing when it will be received — had a potential life-altering impact on those veterans and dependents who rely on those services. To contact your legislators about advance appropriations, click here: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=62970431>

### Korean War Memorial Online

Korean War veterans and families can now take a virtual tour of their national memorial from their home computers, as well as other mobile devices. Also included on the 60th Anniversary site is a Korean War Wiki-type encyclopedia, oral histories and other resource material. Visit <http://www.koreanwar60.com/kwm/>.

### World War II Veterans Sought

June 06, 2014 will mark the 70th anniversary of D-Day, when 73,000 American troops, joined together with allied forces in the largest amphibious invasion in world history, leading to a decisive Allied Victory marking the beginning of the end of World War II in Europe. The Lakeshore Lancers Marching Band of Stevensville, Michigan, has been invited to join as an official representative of Michigan in Normandy, France, in June of 2014. The band will join in the American Liberation Parade that will step off on the actual anniversary day, June 06, 2014 in the French Village of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, the first village to be liberated by American Troops. They will also perform at the American Cemetery of Omaha Beach and on the grounds of the French Senate in Paris. During their performances in Normandy, the marching students want to wear a ribbon in honor of each of the last living World War II Veterans of Michigan. Upon their return to the United States, these epaulettes (shoulder ornaments) will be mailed back to the Veterans as a mark of gratitude and appreciation. We need your help in identifying these last Michigan Heroes of World War II. If you know any of them, please send the name, address, and phone number of these Veterans so that we can Honor them; send to: Mrs. Von Koenig, Director of Bands, Lakeshore Public Schools, 5771 Cleveland Avenue, Stevensville, MI 49127. You can find more information about this program and how you can help support them on the following web-site; [www.ddaymichigan.com](http://www.ddaymichigan.com). Thank You!!!

## Area 5 Director



by Joanna  
Atkinson,  
Area 5  
Director

### Scrambling For Work Hours

a number of offices that are looking for PTFs to be loaned to other offices. Also a number of offices have PSE clerks and these hours are to go to PTFs before going to non-career employees as long as you are available. This may not be the ideal solution but there are hours in most areas. If your Postmaster will not help you, call me and I will do my best to assist you.

On another subject, the hours for cleaning your office are to be in addition to any normal hours you work. That was the whole purpose of that agreement. If you are being told to clean and it isn't an increase I need to be told. I can't file a grievance if I'm not told of a situation.

Again I will address the DAS award

as I understand it. This award again deals with the hours your Postmaster can do clerk work. If you are in a Level 20 and above, they can do NO clerk work. Level 18's can only work 15 hours per week. Level 15 and 16 only 25 hours. Next issue, if you are sent home and there is no clerk in the building, all of those hours the Postmaster is manning the window count towards those limits. It is not 5 minutes, then 1 minute, then 2 minutes and so on. If their drawer is in the counter line and there is no clerk in the building, all of those hours count. Questions, call me and I will help in any way I can. I do work days now and I do not take my phone up to the window, but if you call I will call you as soon as I can. My number is 989-295-5454.

If you are in a small office that now has a full time regular from Saginaw, Gaylord or Lansing please try to keep in mind these clerks are not that thrilled to be there either. They were forced into making a major career change because management decided it made more sense to send ALL of our mail to the Metroplex to be processed. This change not only affected the employees in Saginaw but it also has adversely affected the mail for our customers.

I realize your hours have probably been affected, but here are a few suggestions to pick up some hours. There are



by Michael A. Long,  
Executive Secretary

## Executive Secretary's Report

# Takeover — One Day At A Time

Fellow Michiganders, little by little our freedoms are being taken away from us. How many times have you heard that, and want to just punch the person saying it? Well, put down your fists; because believe it or not, I am going to sort of say it this month.

I am not going to say it fully, because it is like most things in life, it is how one perceives what is going on to fully believe if one's freedoms are slipping away, or if it is just one person's opinion or assumption (and we all know what it means to assume). However, in this case, I want to bring to you, something that probably slipped unnoticed. A new law that was passed in Michigan on how or what happens when someone takes to court something that was signed into law by our illustrious governor and legislature.

The law cleared the GOP-led Legislature just two weeks after being introduced. It transfers Court of Claims cases — those seeking at least \$1,000 in damages from the state — from the circuit court in Ingham County, home of the state's capital city, to the appeals court,

where four judges will hear the cases. Those judges also gain jurisdiction over lawsuits against the state that are now overseen by county judges elsewhere: constitutional challenges, civil rights claims, and alleged freedom of information and open meetings violations.

The law requires the Michigan Supreme Court to appoint four appeals judges for two-year terms to be Court of Claims judges. Their rulings could be appealed to other appeals court judges, and cases heard in Lansing would also be heard in Detroit and Grand Rapids.

What does this mean for us? Let's use the recent Right to Work law that was signed last year and the subsequent lawsuit that followed: "John Doe filed a suit against the open meeting rule for the Right to Work law in Ingham Court on January 1, 2013. John Doe, the concerned citizen he is, was waiting for his trial to come up on the docket to be heard by the judge. On November 12, 2013, Governor Synder signed a law saying that his lawsuit (among many) now has to go before this Court of Claims. The four judges (remember they are appointed by the Supreme Court, which as of today has a 5 - 2 Republican majority) hear the case

and make their ruling. The ruling, which not surprisingly does not go in favor of John Doe is then appealed to . . . where? Appeals court . . . and then from there??? . . . Supreme Court (the same people who appointed the judges who heard the first arguments). Does anyone think there will be any overturning of their ruling? So . . . what does this mean??? Simple, we won't be able to fight laws anymore, or if the Democrats were to gain the governorship back next year . . . can you see where this will lead?

Now, you are probably thinking that whatever was going to happen, will happen anyways when it got to the Supreme Court. Probably, the only difference is, the implementation of it, and the time the parties have to fight and get the law changed. Instead of having injunctions of the law while it goes through the system, there won't be any recourse. Just something to think about.

Happy Holidays to each of you and your families . . . and let us not forget those families who are separated while their loved ones are serving our country. Happy Veterans Day to each of you . . . whether currently serving or having done so in the past.

While the holidays are a time to reflect on the past, and the year which is now coming to an end, it is also a time to look forward to the upcoming year. With this in mind, I wanted to make sure you were made aware of some upcoming events: February 2014 (Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting); April 2014 (Michigan Labor Press Spring Conference); May 22 - 24, 2014 (MPWU Constitutional Convention); July 21 - 25, 2014 (APWU National Convention). As always, check the MPWU website for up-to-date information.

In closing, this time of the year is also time for us, those with either College bound kids, or who are already in college to look at scholarships for the upcoming year. Some have deadlines as soon as the end of December. I know the Union Plus Scholarship deadline is January 31st. From one parent who has two kids in college, all I can tell you is to GET BUSY. There are A LOT of scholarships out there, just need to look and apply. The old adage is true . . . if you don't do anything, nothing will happen; or in this case: if you don't apply, you won't have any chance of receiving.



by Linda Turney,  
National Business Agent

## Turney at the Table

# POSTPLAN Takes Our Work

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

The USPS Post Office Structure Plan commonly referred to as POSTPLAN calls for reduced staffing in small post offices. The USPS is moving Postmasters into Administrative Post Offices (AO) and replacing them with Postmaster Replacements (PMR) in Remotely Managed Post Offices (RMPO).

One of our arguments in relation to the implementation of the POSTPLAN is Article 1.2, page 2. When our work, not excluded by Article 1.2, is not being performed by managers/supervisors, it must be assigned to the clerk craft. The memorandum on page 297-298 of the CBA is clear:

*When non-managerial or non-supervisory work, not otherwise excluded by Article 1.2, which was being performed by supervisors, is no*

*longer performed by supervisors, then it must be assigned to clerk craft employees.*

All new positions and new work that is non-supervisory shall be our work. Article 1.5 is clear:

*In addition, the Employer shall identify all new non-managerial and non-supervisory work and assign such work at the national level to the national craft unit most appropriate for performance of such work within thirty (30) days of having done so.*

The POSTPLAN is also in violation of the Global Settlement, page 299 of the CBA wherein level 18 office Postmasters may perform only 15 hours of our work and may not use a Postmaster Replacement (PMR). For level 15/16 offices Postmasters may perform only 25 hours of our work and may not use a PMR.

One of the many issues concerning POSTPLAN is whether or not the RMPO are treated as the same installation. The

Union contends that the Administrative office (AO) and the RMPO are the same installation and to be treated as though they are a branch or a station of the AO. The National arbitration case has been presented as I write this article. Our legal team at National APWU is working on their brief which is due this week fighting the POSTPLAN. We should get the National Award shortly.

### A New Direction

In an election where incumbents were booted out, I am grateful to be re-elected to serve you again. On an APWU Headquarters level, we are heading in a new direction. Our newly elected officers are all activists. I have worked with our new clerk craft director, Clint Burelson, on the 2000 Constitution Committee at our convention in Philadelphia. I look forward to working with Clint again as we continue our common struggle uniting the clerk craft, preserving and returning our work.

I have also worked with President Dimondstein. Mark and I were in Ohio working to organize DHL prior to their

bankruptcy. Although we were unable to organize DHL, we did get to know each other. I have much respect for Mark and his dedication to our movement. I look forward to working with him and his ideas as we begin forming the "Grand Alliance" for the betterment of our workers and all workers.

Elections are a celebration of Democracy. Now that ours is over, the people have spoken. Let us unite for our common cause at Headquarters and in the field. We have a big job in front of us and we need every member's effort to overcome our gridlocked Congress, consolidations and closures and other hurdles we face.

### Happy Holidays

Whatever you choose to celebrate this time of year, I hope that it is blessed with multitudes of family and friends. Thank you for your activism and membership in our great Union. Thank you for your hard work, generosity and most of all our friendship which is important to me. I am giving thanks this year for the opportunity to serve you.

## Retiree Involvement



by Al  
LaBrecque,  
Retiree's Chapter  
President

# "Be Careful What You Wish For, You Just Might Get It"

I don't know if that's a valid quote, but that's my sentiment at this writing. With 8 days away from home to attend the All-Craft Retirees' Dept. Conference in Vegas this time of year when there's a ton of winterizing necessary to finish before the snow flies, which we've had a couple of doses already, coinciding with our Nov. 15th deer season, a.k.a. "St. Antler Day", and the miserable weather we've been experiencing, it's been challenging to say the least! That said, I'll attempt to relate events of the All-Craft Retirees' Dept. Conference in brief, and information pertinent to retiree members.

**THANK YOU** — I think! I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to those Central Region retiree members who elected me to represent your best interests in Convention, and between, as your national Retiree Delegate. I commend ALL 3,661 retiree members who took time to vote; 1,981 for me, and 1,681 for my opponent who I met in Vegas. Meeting Paul Renshaw (Cleveland) was a positive, warm experience, with both of us expressing our desire to advance the Retirees' Dept. Brother Renshaw was a respectful candidate, and a true gentleman in person.

As for the Central Region retiree vote totals; it's worth noting they exceeded all vote totals for NBA positions and national officer offices except for the top resident officer positions. The 32% retiree ballot return, while not nearly good enough, far exceeded the anemic active member percentage. The minority spoke for the majority.

That should be concerning to every member, active or retired! I simply cannot understand not completing and returning a postage paid ballot that's mailed directly to 195,000 members with only 48,000 taking just minutes to vote their choices. It's especially troubling that active members can be so abjectly apathetic in choosing their leadership after all that's threatening their livelihoods and uprooting their lives with consolidations, excessing, and the slings and arrows from all directions by

the USPS and Congress. It just doesn't compute! Sometimes I wonder why I should care so deeply when those who are in harm's way apparently don't give a rip.

**WINNERS!** — On a more positive note; allow me to congratulate my home Flint Area Local Retiree Chapter President Patty Miller, Chapter officers and members for voting 56% and thus one of the top 3 voting Retiree Chapters in their category nationwide, rewarding the FMAL Chapter with the \$1,000 incentive prize. You made me proud, and so should you be!

**CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS** — I'll try to minimize the corresponding lowlights, or save them for another time, as there are some, which means we have our work cut out for us. Just because retirees gained the historic eligibility to vote for national officers, we are far from reaching equity as APWU members in my considered judgment. As always with APWU events, it was good to be with my kind of people again, reconnecting with old acquaintances and making new ones. There was greater acceptance and recognition by participant leaderships, both active and retired, than from previous experiences, and I'll leave it at that . . . for now.

Director Judy Beard was everywhere, had a huge array of classes for retiree attendees, some redundant for me, but extremely valuable for eager participants. Yet, I was fairly itching for the 2 general sessions where we could get into the nuts and bolts of our internal issues and proposals for the 2014 National Convention in Chicago. Some of that precious time was expended with presentations by invited speakers, but we were able to get our two cents in at various times. Among some of those were Rocky Midgett, C.O. Mgr. APWU Health Plan who provided valuable information and fielded thoughtful inquiries, an impressive panel of representatives assembled by Dir. Beard consisting of the Alliance for Retired Americans Rich Fiesta who discussed the 1.5% COLA increase for 2014 Social Security recipients as well as on our annuities, and reported that Medicare premiums will remain at \$104.90 due to the Affordable Healthcare Act, a huge positive for "Obamacare". We also heard from OPM Director Sharon Appel, Jessica Klement, NARFE Legislative Dir., an AARP official, among other representatives of those retiree and seniors organizations, along with

APWU Chief Counsel Anderson. Lots of valuable contact information too extensive to relate here, but useful in our representing the membership.

**RETIREE DELEGATES** — Western Region Delegate Byron Denton had to cancel attending the All-Craft due to a last-minute health issue that landed him in the hospital. That was a serious blow to me personally, since we have collaborated so well together on retiree objectives, not to mention my concerns for Byron's well-being. Thankfully, he's on the mend. The most significant 45 minutes of the entire 6 days of the conference was an arranged meeting with our newly elected APWU President, Mark Dimondstein, the 4 Retiree Delegates, and Director Beard. Without going into specifics, we had an opportunity to express our objectives, and to receive Brother Dimondstein's views on Retiree Involvement, the Retirees' Dept., and response to resolutions proposals, particularly mine, for the 2014 Convention. While there was some general agreement, it was obvious there's some differences that need addressing. I was especially concerned that the APWU perception that NALC retirees "run their Union" prevails, which has been APWU skeptics' reasoning for hindering many of our objectives, reared its ugly head during our meeting. I will be addressing that issue much further in this, and other forums. It's disturbing at the very least, and I'll leave it at that for now. President Dimondstein's agreement to meet again didn't pan out, but he advised that he would have Dir. Beard arrange a teleconference with the 5 Retiree Delegates. I can hardly wait!

Then, at the second general session, the 4 Delegates comprised a panel where each of us had an opportunity to address the body from the podium. I took that opportunity to outline the resolutions I'm considering for the 2014 Convention; establishing a Retirement Technician for the department to handle complex retirement issues of active and retired members, their spouses and survivors. To re-designate the APWU Retirees' Department as the APWU Retirees' "Division," and re-designate National Retiree Delegates as "Regional Retiree Representatives," Each proposal designed to provide representation for retired members, which I adamantly believe is what we should be all about. Incredibly, not all of our own retiree leadership agree, some who have been on the APWU dime for ages. Well, we're going to have that

"conversation" in spades, and that I can promise!

So, that's an overview of what I deemed to be highlights of the conference, but which only scratches the surface. It certainly provides me lots of fodder leading up to our MPWU State and APWU National Conventions this coming year. I can assure the membership, active and retired, that just because we're not all on the same page with the objectives I've outlined, I won't roll over simply for the sake of harmony. We haven't achieved our gains since 1996 without serious debate, and I suspect that's going to be the case going forward. I didn't run for this unpaid position for an expenses paid ride to conventions, but to fight like hell, if necessary, for Retiree Involvement. On that, Michigan and Central Region retiree members, national, state and Local leaderships can be assured!

**CHAPTERS CHARTERED** — Dir. Beard presented newly organized Local Retiree Chapters their charters during the conference. Receiving their charter, was the 480-481 Area Local Retiree Chapter, Michigan's 5th. Congratulations to Chapter Pres., Paul Felton and officers who just were officially elected. The Retirees' Dept. is growing by leaps and bounds which is good for all concerned.

**NEW PRESIDENTS** — With the election of (now former) MPWU President John Marcotte to APWU Legislative/Political Director, and Flint Area Local President Curtis Walker to Maintenance NBA, their vacancies have been filled by appointment. Congrats and best wishes for success to MPWU President, Jesus Gonzales (Central MI A.L.), and FMAL President, Mike Mize. I look forward working with both.

**PREPARE NOW** — for the 2014 MPWU State Convention scheduled to be held May 21-24 at Mission Point, Mackinac Island. The Michigan State Retiree Chapter constitutional convention will tentatively be held Friday, May 23rd. I encourage all our state's Local Chapters to send delegates where we will be electing State Chapter officers and deliberating on our retiree objectives and issues.

**'TIS THE SEASON** — to wish all our Sisters and Brothers A Joyous Holiday Season; A Merry and Blessed Christmas, and A Happy and Healthy New Year where it will be necessary to . . . Be Strong!





by James  
Stevenson,  
Area 2 Director

## Area 2 Director

### **THE UNION STRIKES BACK:**

# Huge Arbitration Victories In Detroit

Postal Management has taken the position for the most part that “we are going to do what we want, catch us if you can.” Well, Postal Management you have been caught. Over the past 3 to 4 years management in Detroit engaged in all-out war against the clerk craft. Our union Brothers and Sisters were subjected to improper excessing, denial of retreat rights, denial of severance pay, Letter Carriers performing our work, supervisors performing our work, improper reversions, and part-time regulars working outside of their bid schedules.

Over the last five months the Detroit District Area Local has won some major victories which I hope will encourage everyone to keep fighting because there is light at the end of the tunnel. The first major victory was a class action on improper excessing in which the Postal Service excessed senior employees out of the craft and installation prior to junior employees. Management argued in vain that some of them were injured and Pittsburgh and other places did not want injured employees. We all know that seniority is the sole criteria for purposes of excessing. The arbitrator ordered the return of all the improperly excessed employees and a determination is to be made on financial damages.

The second major victory involved the issue of severance pay for employees who

properly decline a directed reassignment outside of a 50 mile radius. The Postal Service felt they had the right to simply separate an employee who could not move to another city or who could not carry mail. Management in Detroit said we will simply put these people in the streets and terminate them as if they were never Postal employees. The ELM specifically grants employees who are involuntarily separated an entitlement to severance pay. For an employee with 25 years this could amount to as much as \$60,000.

The third major victory came in the form of denial of retreat rights. Management had devised a diabolical scheme in which they would intercept the pre-award notices and delete the names of excessed clerks who were properly awarded bid jobs to return to Detroit. The covert operation “Operation-Never let anyone return home” was foiled when the Postal Service provided one of the pre-awards they failed to redact in time. The arbitrator ordered the return of the clerks who were improperly denied retreat rights and a determination on financial damages. It is very important that stewards clearly understand that clerks have a right to return to the “first available vacancy” not just to residual vacancies.

The fourth major victory arose from the timeless battle of carriers and supervisors performing clerk work. While

management is constantly utilizing CSV which is short for “completely shady variables” and function “fake” reviews to reduce the number of clerk assignments, they freely utilize others to do our work. A class action was filed for the entire Detroit installation in which the arbitrator awarded a cease and desist and payment at the overtime rate for all work performed by carriers and supervisors for the past two years. It has become such a common occurrence that the carriers have now met the 30 hours a week of performing clerk work, they technically are entitled to a clerk uniform allowance.

The fifth major victory came in the form of a \$500,000 arbitration award on utilizing part-time regular clerks outside their bid hours. After excessing the full-time employees management continued to improperly expand the hours of the PTRs. Although the category of PTR was eliminated in the current contract the work hour limitations on employees holding NTFT assignments of less than 8 hours in a day and 40 hours in a week are bound to work the hours of their form 50 and official bid assignment. The same violation which gave rise to the \$500,000 award is still present if NTFT employees are working beyond their bid hours. The major difference is that the NTFT employees are now entitled to “out of schedule” pay whereas the former PTRs were not. The restriction does not exist for assignments of 8 hours

a day and 40 hours minimum a week.

You would think that after losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in arbitration the Postal Service would change their behavior and follow the contract. It is quite the opposite. They simply try to devise a better mousetrap and keep the check writing pen ready. The major problem is that no management official is held accountable for these financial losses which did not have to occur if the contract were adhered to. Everyone in management is consumed with giving the appearance that they are a miracle worker on paper and their operation can run with hardly any clerks at all. In the end it is the postal employee and the public who lose as the self-serving actions and the callous disregard of the contract by management places the very existence of the Postal Service in jeopardy. Do not blame the arbitrators for correctly applying the contract, do not blame the employees for speaking up, and do not blame the unions for representing the workers. Management, there is but one to blame, and they are looking at you in the rear view mirror.

In closing, I would like to thank all the National Officers who conducted the arbitration training I attended in Atlanta during the month of May, and also my Local President for sending me. The result of my very first case as an advocate was a \$500,000 award for our members.



by Thomas  
Lothamer,  
Area 7  
Director

## Area 7 Director

# Behind Enemy Lines

The battle continues with the Postal Service and its compliance with our contract. Re-occurring violations are 1.6b where the Postmaster is limited to 25 hours of bargaining unit work per week, if you are a level 15 or 16 office, 15 hours of bargaining unit work if you are a level 18 office, and zero hours of bargaining unit work if you are a level 20 office. The first myth that we need to bust is what size office you are. Do not buy into the “we are now a 4 hour office or a six hour office.” Whatever your office was prior to the signing of our contract November 21, 2010 through its life May 20, 2015, that is what you are, and if you are confused call your representative and they can tell you.

This being said, if it is not issuing

discipline or granting leave then management is performing your work; box mail, window, distribution, shipping and receiving. Cleaning should be performed by clerks in the absence of an APWU represented custodian/maintenance employee. Bulk mailings, BWEU computer, final reports, lobby sweeps, pretty much whatever you are doing as an SSA – if management is doing it then it is your work so pay attention, your future depends on your awareness and education.

Another violation to be aware of is Article 5, Unilateral Action or “Crossing Craft.” We understand that the Postal Service is doing a HORRIBLE job of staffing our offices and everybody is working shorthanded. Just to get a break in you may let someone in your office lend you a hand, but if this occurs then you are enabling your own

demise. It is not your fault the USPS is not hiring people and you have a fear or maybe commitment to get the mail moving. However when this happens the hours are not reflected correctly when budgets are being drawn up, based on hours worked, mail volume, etc... then that office has demonstrated the lack of need of clerk hours and then your hours are reduced and violations are occurring. There is standby time for carriers and if they are your friends (as is the case in so many offices) then they will work with you to preserve your work. This could result in late scans, late street time, late getting the window opened, but until the USPS fixes our staffing needs with career employees then we are just cheating ourselves.

We are out there, trying to save our Postal Service, in the trenches, behind enemy lines. We want this to work, we

want to have a future working for the USPS but until we convince our peers and managers that they are not helping us with their scans and number crunching, we must report this accurately and not shortcut these numbers simply based on a goal or a budget. Until we can do that it will continue to be a battle. We are face to face with the enemy every day and in some cases it may be when we wake up and look in the mirror because we are not fighting for our right to work.



**Give Union Made Gifts!**

# New APWU Leader Promises An Aggressive Approach

by Joe Davidson

At some point soon, someone might need to remind Mark Dimondstein that he asked for this.

Taking over as president of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) during a time when the U.S. Postal Service is a financial wreck doesn't sound like fun. He'll be installed as president of the nation's largest postal union, with almost 200,000 members, on Nov. 12 after winning an upset election last month.

But the 30-year veteran of the Postal Service from Greensboro, N.C., didn't unseat incumbent Cliff Guffey to have a good time. Dimondstein did it to protect union members from what he sees as the creeping privatization of postal services and to give the workers a union leadership that more aggressively defends their interests as management tries to dig out of an ever-sinking financial hole.

Over the past two years, USPS has lost \$20 billion and has missed \$16.7 billion in payments to the Treasury for future retiree health benefits.

USPS "is in the midst of a financial disaster," says an agency news release.

***We're going to have lines in the sand that we're not willing to cross.***

"The Postal Service as it exists today is financially unsustainable," Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe told a Senate committee in September.

With this bleak backdrop, Dimondstein's victory indicates the emergence of a more militant union. "The APWU membership has spoken decisively," he said, "for a new direction in our union as we face the challenges of protecting our jobs, our retirement and our public postal service from the postal privatizers on Wall Street,

in Congress and even in postal headquarters."

In a recent interview with the Federal Diary, Dimondstein discussed where he wants to take the union and the financial troubles of the agency where his mem-

bers work. This is an edited transcript of that conversation.

**What is this new direction where you want to take APWU?**

The new direction is where the American Postal Workers Union focuses its fight to save the United States post office. It should be there for generations to come. It should be vibrant. We thought the current administration was solely focused on lobbying Congress. We believe Congress moves best when the people move to make demands on Congress. Also the new direction has to do with the relationship with postal management. We think postal management is intent on privatizing the Postal Service, which would be the worst thing that could happen to the Postal Service.

**Let me ask about this privatization notion. That is not something postal management has proposed to Congress.**

Management hasn't proposed it directly to Congress, but everything they are doing is lining the Postal Service up for privatization. Management has proposed five-day delivery. If you only deliver five days, then that might be four days, then somebody else on the private side starts delivering one day, two days and three days and so on. If the mail can't be processed and delivered in a timely manner, then someone else is going to do that, people are going to start looking elsewhere. If post offices are closed or their hours are cut back, then people are going to be forced to go to a private pharmacy or an Office Depot type of store or a Wal-Mart to

buy their postal products. All of that is heading toward privatization.

**How will the union's relationship with management change under your direction?**

We'll have to see. We're going to have lines in the sand that we're not willing to cross. We would expect from management that they stop these (postal) plant closings. (Donahoe has reported to Congress about "the accelerated consolidation" of postal processing facilities and the "reduction in hours at 13,000 Post Offices, in conjunction with the expansion of alternate retail access.")

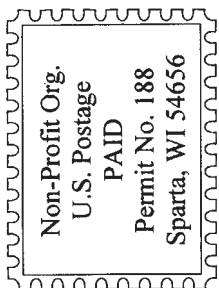
We're not afraid to march, we're not afraid to sit in if we got to and we think we need to work with all the other postal unions. While we're not calling today for the resignation of the PMG (postmaster general), if the postmaster general doesn't respond to the message our union sent, then we'll also have to deal with that question.

**Are there any issues that you would advance that have not been advanced by APWU so far?**

I think we need much more solidarity amongst the postal unions in terms of our common fight in a time of crisis. I think we have to work with the labor movement, the AFL-CIO in a much stronger way. I think we have to work with the people of this country and their organizations in a much stronger way.

I call it the grand alliance. When we take office on Nov. 12, we're going to immediately set out to build a grand alliance with the people of this country, organizations that represent seniors, civil rights organizations, veterans' organizations, business organizations, organizations that represent folks in small towns to build an alliance in this country to defend our national treasure. People in this country still really support the post office. It's part of our community. It's part of our neighborhoods. We think given the opportunity that people will step up and defend their right to a public postal service.

— reprinted from *the Washington Post*



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## DEADLINE

The deadline for articles for the January-February issue of the

**Michigan Messenger is  
January 27, 2014**