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President's Message



by Jesus M. Gonzales,
President

A Challenging Year

Season's Greetings fellow union Brothers and Sisters.

This has been a challenging year, with much more to come in the future. The national leadership of the American Postal Workers Union has made huge strides to make a career path/conversion for a large portion of the APWU Custodial and Clerk Craft Postal Support Employees. Additionally, through national negotiations and arbitration awards thousands of additional clerk craft jobs are our returning to the bargaining units.

Please contact your respective MPWU Craft Directors and/or Area Representative with any concerns about this conversion process. Over the next few months, the national APWU will start contract negotiations with the USPS, and feel confident we have the best team in place to bring positive changes to our contract. Stay tuned for updates...

USPS 2015 and beyond . . .

What will the US Postal Service look like in years to come? As this edition of the *Michigan Messenger* goes to the press, the USPS is working on plans to close and consolidate the Lansing, Kalamazoo, and Kingsford Mail Processing facilities here in Michigan.

Below is their model for the remaining mail processing plants:

1. (20) hours of all mail processing functions for Primary, Secondary, and DPS sort programs
2. Only a (4) hour work window for preventative maintenance (varied by installation)
3. Reduction in mail processing equipment (varied by installation)
4. Longer DPS runs (consolidation of all current programs varied by installation)
5. Possible further reduction in both Clerk and Maintenance Employees (varied by location and process model)

This plan is setting the organization up for failure. It's not privatizing, but rather destruction. The proposed change in service/delivery standards starting on January 5, 2015 goes hand-in-hand with this new mail processing plan. The Michigan Postal Workers Union along with a majority of your APWU Local Offices have tirelessly brought this information to our

Please visit the MPWU.com website for any updates on your primary Mail Processing facilities, status of any Congressional action, and most importantly any call to action from the APWU on contacting your local Congressional Reps. with our concerns. Our future depends on this continued effort to bring the truth of this projected dismantling of the USPS

are able to enjoy today, from the 8 hour workday, health care, personal/sick leave, and a secure retirement. This continued fight to gain more for the employees, will slowly dissipate without the voice of our vote. This is a movement: will we stand and watch it all go away, or will we act and use this power to overcome these obstacles? Collectively we can move this industry forward, but it will take the commitment of all of us to engage the political process, educate each other, and get this message out.

"This plan is setting the organization up for failure."

Congressional Leaders, to attempt to stave off this destructive plan. We can only hope the message is heard and Congress acts.

National APWU Vice President Debbie Szeredy has developed an aggressive campaign to use all of national APWU's resources to get our Congressional leaders to hear our concerns. A local taskforce will engage local and state government to assist in our goals to stave any further mail processing consolidations, and we request that Congress require the USPS to commit to its constitutionally requirement to allow for the public to meet and have input regarding changes that effect every community across the country.

to light, and challenge those who were elected to protect this public institution from self-destruction.

Election 2014 . . .

Apparently most people were happy with the direction we are heading, or chose not to educate themselves on the issues that plague our future; because more than 69% of eligible voters stayed home this mid-term election. Traditionally mid-term elections are a prime opportunity to start to change the direction and future of our great State, as well as to change the direction of our country.

The labor movement started in the 1880's to fight for all the luxuries we

Lastly, I personally send my utmost gratitude to National APWU President Mark Dimondstein and Legislative/Political Director John Marcotte for allowing me to be deeply involved with this year's election process with the Michigan AFL-CIO. Mobilizing our members to volunteer, expressing the importance of this election, and more importantly getting out the vote. To our dismay, more people chose to skip this opportunity to change our direction, not only the course of the US Postal Service, but the betterment of our future. Together we will succeed, divided we may struggle. Motivate, educate, and dedicate your mindset for a better future.

From my family to all of you and yours, we wish all a wonderful holiday season.



November 14 picket at Royal Oak on the National Day of Action



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by Roscoe Woods, Legislative Director

Legislative Report

Wrapping Up A Disastrous 2014 Election

The world is run by those who show up and sorry to say for the majority of the middle class and working people, we were happy to stay home and cede leadership here in Michigan and Congress to the Tea Party and the GOP.

This election boasted the lowest voter turnout in 24 years and it translated into a serious number of GOP victories at the ballot box.

This latest election is one of the most frustrating I have ever played an active role in, and for every one of our members who either voted against their local and state unions' recommendation in their local house races or who voted for Senator Elect Gary Peters but crossed over and voted for Governor Snyder, I hold myself partially responsible.

As I review the defeat of labor at the ballot box on November 4th, 2014, I continue to believe that we could have done a better job getting our message out to the membership. Representation includes making recommendations such as who to vote for and in doing so making sure you all clearly understand the stakes and reason for our recommendations.



Wendy Kempke with Roscoe Woods at the Royal Oak picket

Who else can we blame but ourselves?

The MPWU leadership will evaluate at the state and local level our communication to our membership as well as our preparation as we look towards 2016. Given the dismal voter turnout we must find a way to better explain the importance of supporting the candidates your leadership recommends.

“This election boasted the lowest voter turnout in 24 years.”

I really never thought we'd also have to come up with a strategy to get across the importance of simply showing up at the polls.

MPWU Messenger Editor Paul Felton worked very hard to get the Michigan Democratic Party to publically support our Staples Boycott by getting a resolution passed publicly supporting our boycott – this was the only resolution of its kind passed in the entire nation.

We rewarded this public show of solidarity by staying home and if we did go to the polls, many failed to support our local Democrats.

Brother Paul worked very hard to get this support as part of each candidate's platform. Supporting postal workers was a commitment every Democrat made – and we failed to follow through and vote for them at the polls.

Working hard for exposure to our fights becomes that much more difficult if we cannot follow through and turn that support into votes. I am not sure what we can do to better get across to our membership who in Congress has our best interests in mind.

The GOP has no such commitment to

organized labor or the APWU; the GOP has made it clear we are a group of people who earn too much and enjoy far too many benefits. I struggle to understand when our membership or other hard working middle class people cast their ballot against the best interest of their checkbook.

The agenda here in Michigan as well as across this nation is to take our good paying jobs from us. Many of you reading this are in the most rural portions of our state. Compare your lifestyle to your neighbors; in most rural towns and villages a postal worker's income and benefits are the envy of others.

How is it we vote for those who want to diminish our ability to earn such a wage?

Take a look at who is supporting us in our fight to prevent the PMG's destruction of the American people's postal services delivery standards. Not only has the Democratic Party signed on to support our Staples boycott; every Democrat here in Michigan's Congressional delegation has signed on, standing with us as we defend the people's post office.

At this point the GOP which holds the majority of our national congressional seats here in Michigan can boast a total number of ZERO house reps supporting the people's post office.

Well the stakes are as high as they ever have been and come January 5th, 2015 all the centuries of hard work that created one of the most reliable and trusted services in the history of this nation may just be a memory, and in the end if we fail to act we can tell our grandchildren we were there when the USPS became irrelevant.

We will continue to reevaluate our plans and our strategies for the 2016 election cycle. I believe labor is severely bloodied but we are not yet broken. One thing I know for certain, those who wish to destroy us will not rest, they will not pause and they will not lose one second's sleep over every postal job that is lost.

We will either realize where our allies sit and support them or we will see the further erosion of our wages and our benefits. I stand committed to seeing that does not happen. I know the Democrats here in Michigan stand with me. What I am searching for is how to get the membership of this union to do the same.

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 Haulers	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.



Editor's Report



by Paul Felton,
Editor

A Better Way To Fight For A Contract

Our contract expires in May. People want to know what our national leadership is going to do for us. That's the wrong question. The right question is, what will we do to help our national leadership in this fight. Because the new strategy is: *we will all fight together* for this contract, along with the American people.

We are fighting for more than ourselves. We are fighting to save a valuable service that the public relies on, and which management is trying to systematically dismantle. It is our job to spread the word and get the public on our side, so that there will be a positive pressure on the negotiators.

Our demands will include improvements in our wages and conditions, changes regarding NTFTs and PSEs, and other resolutions that were adopted at our last Convention. At the same time we will fight for the public – to expand service hours, to provide more services including banking, to keep local post offices open.

Management has been systematically dismantling the Postal Service and degrading the quality of service to the public. The Staples fiasco is one example. Their plans to close 82 more plants is another: mail

Guild, the Steelworkers, two teacher unions (AFT and MEA) the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO and I probably left out a few. Oh yes, the group organizing Black Friday protests at Wal-Mart supported us too.

Talk it up on the workroom floor. Get your coworkers involved and feed off each other's energy. This year we are all part of the team fighting for a good contract.

"We are fighting to save a valuable service that the public relies on, and which management is trying to systematically dismantle."

that used to take one day will now take 2-3 days. They still want to eliminate Saturday delivery. Wherever they can, they want to eliminate door-to-door service and replace it with cluster boxes – meaning you have to walk some distance to pick up your mail every day.

That's what the November 14 Day of Action was all about. In Royal Oak we got support from the other postal unions, the Laborers, the Musicians, the Newspaper

This is part of a strategy to build a broad alliance to create a wave of public opinion on our side. And that's where *you* come in. We will be forming Contract Action Teams all over the country. Members and retirees can all play a part. Write a letter. Talk about it at church. Or at the local drinking establishment. Or at the beauty parlor. Or have some people over to the house and have a conversation. Do you belong to a veterans group? Talk about it at your next meeting.

The details of the campaign have not been rolled out yet. But I like the concept. The national leadership plans to take advantage of our greatest resource – the membership. Unlike most unions, APWU has members in every city, town and rural area in the country. Mobilize our forces into an army of organizers, seeking allies, with a message that resonates with the American people, and the contract talks will occur in a more favorable atmosphere. It all kicks off in early 2015.

Enjoy your holidays, and make a resolution to play a role in our contract struggle in 2015.

Area 8 Director



by Wendy Kempke,
Area 8 Director

Fighting For Our Jobs

Happy Holidays Brothers and Sisters.

I want to start off thanking all our members that are out there, in all the unpredictable elements, protesting and fighting for all of our jobs. Helping to educate the public about what is happening to us and how it will affect them. Any members out there wanting to join in are always welcomed. Please feel free to contact any of us for information.

The PostPlan is starting to get new positions filled already. As with everything, not everyone likes change but this has been in the works since the signing of the contract and it's time we get our work back to our craft and get PTF's and PSE's converted. There are a lot of questions on the PostPlan that we are trying our hardest to get answers for.

This is also new to us, we are having a district meeting with our NBA's on Dec 7th-8th that we will discuss the PostPlan. NTFT positions are being created in the level 6 offices for PTF's and I do believe this is a

great opportunity for our PTF's and with their conversions it finally gives PSE's the opportunity for a career position.

There is a lot of change going on and it's happening during our busiest time of the year but that's a great way to start a new year for so many

of our members.

Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!

Poem For November 14th

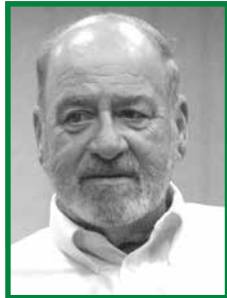
by Paul Felton

It's time for us to take a stand
Postal workers throughout the land
With all 4 unions acting as one
Fighting the bosses who would run
The Postal Service into the ground
With practices that are not sound
Driving customers from our door
To use instead the Staples store
And common sense says that they can't
Shut down many a processing plant
The mail that once came the next day
Will suffer inevitable delay
At dispatch time the boss will say
That's enough sorting for today
The mail still sits there in a pile

Next day delivery is out of style
For this mail they won't hold the truck
It seems they just don't give a
Minute's thought to those who wait
For the mail to come, no matter how late
They won't even bring it to your door
They'll make you walk a few blocks or more
And they're still trying to do away
With mail service on Saturday
This policy impacts all our jobs
While at the same time surely robs
The public that we proudly serve
Of the mail service they deserve
So together we'll take to the street
In order to turn up the heat
On those who want the service to fail
We'll fight to protect America's mail

Retiree Involvement

— Family —



by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

Message:

"And He will raise you up on eagle's wings; bear you up on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of His hand." (From 'On Eagle's Wings')

The tenor and subject of this column will be a departure from my usual fare. I have pretty much always avoided airing personal issues and experiences that aren't Union related although this has a significant Union component that we are truly Family.

July 16, 2014. Packing for my flight to Chicago the next day where I will be advocating resolutions on paramount internal APWU retiree issues. Then the phone

rang, and our lives changed forever. My youngest daughter, sobbing on the phone, informed me that my middle daughter, Lisa, has stage 4 bone cancer. The 10 days away from home, trying to process the situation and daily phone contact with my other 5 kids, while working in an intense convention atmosphere may have contributed to my admittedly intended and harsh assessment of the opposition to Retirees' Dept. related proposals.

The ensuing 4 months was a journey I wouldn't wish on anyone. At the same time, it was a journey which brought our immediate Family together in a loving and deep caring by her two sisters, sisters-in-law, and two aunts, 24/7 with little or no sleep and never a complaint. One daughter-in-law an RN, another had been a Hospice worker. My own 2 sisters, one a RN, the other a LPN. We were blessed with skilled family caregivers, and our 3 sons were towers of strength. It was a journey of not wanting to let Lisa go, yet not wanting her to suffer. As a U. of M. grad, Lisa would tell me that she was "Michigan Strong." Lisa also had an Associate's Degree in early child development. Lisa was indeed "Michigan Strong," fighting to the very end on Nov. 13th, days longer than the Hospice caregivers expected. Family was there all the way, rallying around her.

Lisa, just 50 in June, lost her 51-year old husband to cancer 2 ½ years ago, leaving a 13-year old daughter. Again . . . Family! Youngest son, Noel and wife Teisha, honor Lisa's wishes that they be guardians for Mackenzie who will remain in her school district. Her Family will be keeping their arms around her. Noel is a Flint NE Annex Letter Carrier, and V.P. of Flint Mid-Michigan Branch #256 also

serving as a State NALC Trustee. Ironically, my granddaughter will be covered by FEHBP until age 26.

Then there's my Union Family, supportive as when the Michigan delegates stood behind me at the APWU National Convention microphone. The very first person to greet us at the door of the funeral home for the family viewing period, was a dear retired Flint MI Area Local Brother, Dave Kammerzell, who as an active member, chaired the Local's election committee for years. Then there was a virtual steady stream of my home

nections! The APWU family also recently lost Asst. Maintenance Division Director, Greg See, who had just survived a serious auto accident on his way home to Mansfield, Ohio, and was expected to undergo liver transplant surgery, underscoring that we aren't alone in our sorrow.

When Lisa was in college, loving to write, she pursued journalism. Lisa loved to call to pick my brain on my parents' involvement in the fledgling UAW and the Flint Sit-Down Strike or our postal issues for use in some of her courses. She was an activist, having worked on

resolutions proposals was viewed as harsh in some quarters, this one would probably would have left no doubt.

In the aftermath of these particularly difficult past four months I'm left with conflicting emotions. One of course, the deep, indescribable loss of a child. It shouldn't happen, but it does, but we never expect it will happen to you or yours. I've long been an advocate of "Family comes first!" in my Union and other activities. I didn't always practice that, but learned along the way. Now, it's more acute than ever. Regardless of your

children's age, faults or differences; wrap your arms around them at every opportunity because you never know when they can be taken from you. On the other hand, I and our family have

the heartwarming memories of gratitude for the overwhelming outpouring of support in our time of sorrow by our Union Sisters and Brothers in so many special ways. God Bless all of you.

I'll get back in the groove in due time, just bear with me. I just read where PMG Donahoe is resigning Feb. 1st. Good riddance! But, don't cheer too soon until we see what we're going to get given the makeup of the Board of Governors and political climate. As for politics, we were engaged in support of a State Rep, a State Senator, and 1st Congressional District Rep, and got drubbed on all counts. Outstanding credentials for all 3 Democratic candidates. When only a third of eligible voters choose to cast a ballot, the minority ruling the majority, this is what we get. I could devote an entire column on that subject. About the only saving grace was electing Democrat Gary Peters to fill retiring U.S. Senator Carl Levin's seat. Social Security recipients and CSRS/FERS retirees will get 1.7% COLA increase in 2015. The 2015 APWU Health Plan High Family option premium increased \$7.73 per month, saving \$145.32 over the comparable Blue Cross/Blue Shield monthly premium. APWU High Self premiums increased \$3.42 per month, \$57.11 less per month than the comparable BC/BS plan.

While there was an empty chair at our Family's Thanksgiving tables, we are deeply touched and thankful for our incredibly supportive Union Family. And, since this is the last "Messenger" for 2014; I wish all our Sisters and Brothers a Merry & Blessed Christmas, and a Happy & Healthy 2015.

Be Strong!

"I can't begin to express the gratitude for all the kindnesses and generosity shown by our APWU & NALC Sisters and Brothers, active and retired."

Flint Local and Retiree Chapter officers and members, all dear personal friends as well. A Bible from the Local for Mackenzie, flower and planter arrangements. On the Sunday before we had the 170 mile turnaround Spruce to Flint trip on Monday for the funeral arrangements, a call from our dear sister Judy Beard . . . again, On A Sunday!, from APWU Headquarters, conveying sympathies from APWU Pres. Mark Dimondstein who was likewise in his office that Sunday. The Flint NALC Branch #256 Sisters and Brothers were equally in presence throughout visitation. Two hours into the 1-8 p.m. visitation, the funeral home moved us to their largest room, testament to Lisa, our Union Families, and legions of relatives and friends from all our various walks of life, including the Chair of my Alcona County Democratic Party who braved dicey roads to pay their respects.

On the day of the funeral during the hour long visitation in the vestibule of the church prior to the Mass of Christian Burial, I was overwhelmed to see my dear Sister Lucy Morton who drove up from Royal Oak. Lucy had just experienced the loss of our mutual dear friend and Sister, Donna Ratkos-Mercier, past 480-481 Area Local President. Lucy and Donna were like two peas in a pod, with our mutual connections originating through the late Brother Clyde Hartshorn, his wife Pat, and Donna's husband, Mike. We are indeed Family! Then this lady comes up to me asking if I'm Al, She said that she is Leo Persails' sister-in-law, Jeannines's sister, and that Leo called to extend their condolences. She then tells me that she sings in the choir here and would be singing the Mass. The choir was awesome.

But, imagine the Union Family con-

fundraiser projects with the infamous Michael Moore. Looking back, Lisa was deeply labor oriented and enjoyed hearing about her grandparent's struggle. Lisa was also bipolar. Yes, that dreaded mental illness we don't like to broadcast like it's something shameful. It is an illness just like the cancer that took her life and manifested itself during her 4 month battle. Bipolar disorder plagued Lisa on and off during her 50 years. Just as one of the Kennedy clan former U.S. Rep says in PSA announcements; mental illness is a disease just like diabetes and treatable. Our entire family experienced some pretty profound learning moments surrounding Lisa's two illnesses.

I can't begin to express the gratitude of my entire Family for all the kindnesses and generosity shown by our APWU & NALC Sisters and Brothers, active and retired. Whether by a contribution to Mackenzie's trust fund, visitation, a call or e-mail, a card with a warm message from Locals and Chapters, rank & file members . . . we feel the arms of our Union Family around us. It certainly put life and what's really important in perspective. Despite some of our internal differences, when it's one of ours this Union Family closes ranks.

That doesn't mean that at some point during my tenure until 2016 as MPWU State Retiree Chapter president, and Central Region Retiree Delegate, I won't get back on the bandwagon on retiree and legislative issues. Readers may have noticed a rare absence of my column in the last "Messenger." Oh, I wrote one but wasn't able to submit it by the deadline under the circumstances. Just as well. If my previous column reporting on the National Convention drubbing of retiree

Veterans' Report



by John P. 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. And don't forget our troops. Say a prayer, or whatever you do, for them and their families.

New Year

Happy New Year to one and all. Ditto on the words above about being safe and not drinking and driving. Keep our troops and their families in your prayers and thoughts.

Camp Lejeune Care Update

The Department of Veterans Affairs released final regulations for the "Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act." The published regulations put in motion VA's ability to provide hospital care and medical services for veterans, and to reimburse eligible Camp Lejeune family members for out-of-pocket health care costs related to any of the 15 covered medical conditions listed in the law (P.L. 112-154).

Beginning today, October, 24, 2014, (yeah I'm already working on my article), veterans who were stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for at least 30 days between January 1, 1957 and December 31, 1987 will be able to receive health care for the 15 medical conditions associated with exposure to contaminated drinking water at the Marine Corps base. Eligible veterans may now enroll for VA care and receive treatment for any of the specified conditions without copay. Family members who lived at Camp Lejeune during that time period also may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket medical expenses they incur for care related to the 15 conditions. Family members will continue seeing their community providers, and then apply for VA reimbursement for any costs not covered by their normal health plans. Family members may be reimbursed for expenses incurred on or after March 26, 2013, the day Congress began funding the program. To enroll in VA health care, veterans should contact their local VA facilities. Apply online by visiting <http://www.va.gov/health-benefits/apply/>, or dial 1-877-222-8387 for help. Family members may submit applications online by visiting <https://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov> or dialing 1-866-372-1144. For more information about the program and to see the list of conditions and illnesses associated with exposure, go to: [http://](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp)

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp.

COLA Increase

Earlier this year, Congress passed the authorization for Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all Veterans Affairs beneficiaries. What wasn't known at the time was the amount of the increase, which is based off of the Consumer Price Index and determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Just today, 10-24-14, it was announced that the COLA will increase by 1.7% beginning December 2014.

Fry Scholarships

The Department of Veterans Affairs has begun accepting applications by mail, beginning Nov. 3, for the Fry Scholarship under newly expanded eligibility criteria that now includes *surviving spouses of service members who died in the line of duty after Sept. 10, 2001*. It is the latest in a series of VA actions taken in accordance with the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014. Prior to the expansion, only children of those who died in the line of duty were eligible for Fry Scholarships. It will now provide eligible spouses up to 36 months of the full, 100-percent level of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which includes a *tuition-and-fee payment, a monthly housing allowance, and a stipend for books and supplies*. Some spouses currently eligible for or already receiving benefits under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) program may now be eligible for the Fry Scholarship. All

surviving spouses eligible for DEA and the Fry Scholarship must make an irrevocable election for terms beginning on or after January 1, 2015. Learn more at http://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/docs/factsheets/Fry_Scholarship_Expansion_Factsheet.pdf.

Combat Call Center

The VA Combat Call Center, located outside of Denver, Colo., is a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week referral service for Veterans, family members and anyone looking to help a Veteran. They field calls from active-duty members and their family members seeking counseling services with Vet Centers across the country. In addition to being able to relate and connect with callers, their staff members are also highly trained and possess the experience necessary to provide the right help or service to them. Several of their staff members are licensed mental health providers. The Combat Call Center staff members are subject matter experts on mental health based services offered by VA, such as: mental health/readjustment counseling, homeless programs, bereavement assistance, substance abuse and PTSD treatment options. They can also assist the Veteran looking for services such as the G.I. Bill and VA home loan guaranty. They also routinely provide callers with information about various VA programs, as well as local programs, and instruct them on how to obtain copies of their DD-214s. The Combat Call Center is always available to assist our fellow Veterans. Give them a call at 1-877-WAR-VETS.

Wow

The pole is 400 Feet Tall. There are over 675 cubic yards of concrete in the pole's foundation. The pole weighs in at 420,000 pounds. Each Star measures 3 feet 6 inches. Each Stripe is 4 feet wide. It took 500 gallons of Paint to cover the pole. It's 100 feet taller than the Statue of Liberty. At 7200 Square Feet, its Flag would measure about 85 Feet by 85 Feet if it were square. And it's called America's Tallest Flagpole, and it's in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial

Throughout our nation's history, service men and women have gone bravely into battle, risking their lives and livelihoods, sacrificing their safety to defend America. When their duty is done, many return home to life as it was. Sadly, for over 4 million Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty, leaving the battlefield does not mark the end of conflict. These permanently disabled heroes often carry home life-altering disabilities – stern reminders of the price of freedom. America's disabled Veterans have honored us with their service and selfless duty.

For the first time, America is now paying tribute to some of our most courageous heroes – our Disabled Veterans. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial will celebrate those men and women who may be broken in body – but never in spirit. *Learn more at: <http://avdlm.org/>*

New Leave Year

The 2015 Leave Year begins on Saturday, January 10th. If you are a full-time regular or NTFT employee, you should be able to use your annual leave on that date, even if your 2015 leave entitlement hasn't shown up on your pay stub.

Also, if you are a FTR or NTFT employee, you will have to watch your LWOP through Friday, January 9th to avoid losing annual leave if you exceed 80 hours of LWOP. This is not as simple as it sounds. Your LWOP year-to-date may revert to zero on your pay stub before the end of the leave year, as the calendar year and the leave year are different. The new leave year starts with Pay Period 3 this year, and your LWOP hours keep adding up until that point. If you go on liteblue.usps.gov you can find the LWOP total that matters under an entry called "Leave Increment LWOP."

Those of you who have used up your FMLA entitlement in 2014 can

start using it again on January 10th, provided you meet the other requirements, including 1250 work hours in the last 52 weeks). And those of you out on FMLA as of December 31 can

still use your 2014 FMLA hours until January 9th. And if you have an annual leave balance of more than 440 hours, you have until January 9th to use it or lose it.

Scholarship Programs

APWU offers scholarship programs for High School seniors. To check it out, go to www.apwu.org, click on **Departments and Divisions** and then click **Benefit Programs**. Click on the **Accident Benefit Association** to learn about one scholarship, then go back and click on **Scholarship Programs** to learn about the other scholarships.



Don't Dismantle America's Postal Service was the theme on November 14th.

Station Frustration

by Peggy Whitney,
Minneapolis Area Local

As we enter into the Holiday Mailing season the Postal Service has created the perfect recipe for disaster at many of the community post offices and branches. The last several years of “Earned Staffing” policies has reduced many of the retail stations to one or two Sales Service Associates at the counter to service customers. Additionally, the increased transaction time for International mail and in some cases, passports, has resulted in many of the customer service lines to literally be “out the door”!

Postmasters and Station supervisors avoid the retail lobby like the Plague and frankly, are usually too busy performing bargaining unit clerk work and instructing employees to falsify distribution scans to be bothered with angry customers who complain!

This results in hostile customers who, naturally, voice their frustration at the only visible US Postal Service employee – the Retail Clerk! Dedicated Sales Service Associates are becoming

negative and weary. They diligently service the customers, ask the required hazmat questions, attempt to perform the additional “upsale” (do you need a roll of stamps today?) and ring or call

their Steward so a grievance can be filed. Employees who “work through” an on the clock break are helping management falsely inflate their productivity numbers and you are Working For Free! You

created this lack of staffing and clerks cannot be expected to tolerate hostile customers and missed on the clock breaks. The performance of bargaining unit work by management and carriers at the stations has become so prolific that the few remaining clerks in an office fail to contact their Steward.

The only potential solution for the lack of clerk staffing at

post offices and stations is to have clerks diligently report the clerk work violations and missed on the clock breaks to their Steward so we can pursue monetary remedy for the violations.

Additionally, employees who are instructed to “scan” distribution mail at an appointed time regardless if the mail is actually “up” should report these instructions immediately to your Steward for grievance investigation on possible fraud/falsification of Official Postal Service documents.

The Retail work environment presents enormous challenges for our APWU Clerks and the upcoming Holiday mailing season will be even more difficult with reduced staffing.

-reprinted from *Northern Light-*

“Postmasters and Station supervisors are usually too busy performing bargaining unit clerk work and instructing employees to falsify distribution scans to be bothered with angry customers who complain!”

for help – knowing no one will show up because there aren’t any clerks available as the office is “overstaffed” – and the busy season is just beginning!

The officers and stewards in our Local are hearing increased reports of Retail Clerks missing their “on the clock” break because there is simply no clerk available to relieve them. **This Is Unacceptable!**

On the clock breaks are a hard fought contract provision that provides an opportunity for rest, nourishment and hydration for employees – and it should not be “skipped” because of inadequate staffing from management!

Any employee who is not provided their on the clock breaks should contact

are giving management work that you should be getting paid for not working. Theoretically, employees who work through an on the clock break time should be compensated an equivalent amount of time at the appropriate rate. Additionally, PS form 1767-Safety Hazard/Condition report could be completed as working an employee without their entitled break may create an unsafe work environment depending on the situation.

Retail clerks who encounter a hostile customer should demand the Postmaster/Supervisor in charge come to the counter to address the situation. Often the well-intentioned clerk will try to diffuse the situation, only to have the customer make a formal complaint resulting in a reprimand to the clerk! Management

Black Friday Protests

by Paul Felton

It’s Black Friday and I’m going to Wal-Mart. Not to shop, but to picket.

Yes, on the day after Thanksgiving there were protest rallies at Wal-Mart stores all over the country. The one in Sterling Heights, MI had more than 150 people. We picketed in support of the workers’ demand for a living wage. Most of us stayed outside; a delegation of half-a-dozen clergy went inside to deliver a message to the manager.

Several APWU members and officers participated. We had two reasons. One is to support a simple demand for justice. The other is to continue to build the alliance we need to achieve our goals as postal workers. Indeed, at the short rally that concluded the event, Metro Detroit AFL-CIO President Rick Blocker handed the bullhorn to me so I could speak about the Staples boycott and our upcoming contract fight.

The weather was cold but my remarks got a warm reception. Just like everyone else who spoke. The spirit of solidarity was evident and we must continue to build that solidarity in the days and months ahead.



Black Friday picket in Sterling Heights



by Michael A. Long,
Executive
Secretary

Executive Secretary's Report

Workroom Floor Attitudes

Doing management's work? Let management do what they are getting paid for! All too often I am getting told by fellow members that "I am not going to do that because a Mail Handler will get paid," and they would rather that their operation fail instead of just doing the job. My question to that member, and any member, is: Who the heck cares if a Mail Handler gets paid if they file a grievance? Do you think for one second they care when a clerk gets paid because the Mail Handler is doing their job? Hell no! It is free money; plus they will take every job they can get, and then try to show a pattern so they can get that job permanently (pretty much the same thing we used to do, except now, clerks won't do it). Management pays grievances for the same issue to both sides on a regular basis. I constantly get told that they aren't going to do something that gives money to a Mail Handler. As an employee, our job is to process the mail. How we do it is under the direction of management! Management needs to start managing. Plain and simple. Stop doing management's job for them.

I personally have grievances where they paid the Clerk craft, and then turned around and paid the Mail Handler craft for the same issue. The reason: management doesn't know what is happening in their operations. When management is asked what is needed in an operation to make it succeed, they usually won't do anything about it, or they will say they will have to check with someone and get back to you; or even worse, they will state something like they don't have the staffing at this time to make it happen. Whose fault is that? Not the clerks! Not the customer. It is management's issue.

Here's another example that's even more profound. There was a clerk who was ill and wanted to go home sick. Instead of telling management and having them replace this clerk in the operation so they could go home, they continued to work. When asked, they said that there wasn't anyone to replace them. My response: Whose fault is that? It isn't the clerk's issue. It is management! Management does the staffing. Management does the assignment. Not the bargaining unit! STOP doing management's job for them.

Make them step up and do their job!

Treatment of PSEs. This section is mainly directed at career employees. Postal Support Employees (PSEs) have been part of the bargaining unit now for over three years; however, I still hear from fellow union members that they "don't want to work around PSEs" or they "are only here to take their jobs," or they "are only here to take away my overtime", etc.

First and foremost, PSEs are fellow union brothers and sisters. They are fellow bargaining unit employees and as such deserve the same respect and admiration as you and your fellow career employees also deserve. Actually, when you think about it, PSEs put up with a lot. They don't get Sunday Premium, they don't get paid Holiday Pay, they are paid way less than another employee who works side-by-side with them, they don't get Cost of Living raises, and above all, they aren't covered by each and every provision of the National Agreement. PSEs have been definitely screwed with this contract; hopefully with the next one, since all that has been learned with

this new area, it will be changed and reflect reality.

Secondly, PSEs are here to support themselves and their families just as a career employee is here to do the same. Remember what it was like when you started? And you started more likely as a career employee, not like it is today. Before we joked that there were "lifetime" casuals. Now we have "lifetime" PSEs only because it is taking forever to get them converted to career. Just remember – PSEs are here because they wanted to work! They wanted a job and applied here and was hired. For those career clerks in the plant and 200+ man year offices, you are a full-time clerk. You are guaranteed at least 30 hours (NTFT) or 40 hours (FTR) of work (or pay), nowhere does the contract guarantee you overtime (thus you are not being disenfranchised out of anything).

In closing, I would like to wish each of you the best of this holiday season. Whether you celebrate Kwanza, Hanukkah, EID, or Christmas, may this season be a joyous one. Happy New Year and look forward to meeting you or renewing a friendship in this upcoming year.

Striking Walmart Workers Sit Down

by Mike Hall, AFL-CIO NOW

On November 13 in Los Angeles, Walmart workers participated in their boldest action to date: the first-ever sit-down strike at a Walmart store. They were protesting an end to retaliation when they speak out for \$15 an hour, full-time hours and respect at work.



The striking workers entered the Crenshaw Walmart and refused to move, holding a sit-in near cash registers and racks at the store. The workers chanted, "Stand Up, Live Better! Sit Down, Live Better!" before placing tape over their mouths signifying the company's attempts to silence workers who are calling for better jobs.

After several hours, they left peacefully and headed to another Los Angeles-area store, where they held a rally. Then workers and their supporters took over the intersection near the Pico Rivera Walmart, refusing to leave until they were arrested and removed from the intersection. A total of 28 people were arrested, including clergy, community members and strikers.

The owners of Walmart, the Walton family, is the richest family in America who own nearly \$150 billion in wealth while most Walmart workers make less than \$25,000 a year.

Over the past year, Walmart workers have pressured Walmart to provide workplace accommodations for pregnant workers, to provide access to more hours and, most recently, to pledge to phase out its minimum wage jobs. However, when workers' calls for change started to gain momentum, Walmart struck back. They retaliated against vocal workers standing up for better wages and worker conditions.

A Living Wage

by Paul Felton

Income inequality
Hurts the whole economy
Everyone's income should be
Enough to feed a family
Don't say my job involves no skill
The salary should pay my bills
And I work hard, please understand
to meet the customer's demand
Wal-Mart, Popeye, Mickey D
And the whole fast food industry
Don't treat workers like they should
While their profits are more than good
But if low wage workers unite
We can begin to set things right
We have to mobilize our power
To fight for 15 bucks an hour
If we can win this we will aid
Everyone who's underpaid
So join us please, this is the way
To bring about a better day



by Linda
Turney,
National
Business Agent

Turney at the Table

— Work Place Voices —

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

A few weeks ago, I went to the doctor and was prescribed a medication that gave me a severe allergic reaction. I was diagnosed with anaphylactic shock. I was in the hospital and suffered numerous side effects from this traumatic and life threatening event. One of the many side effects I suffered was a temporary loss of my voice.

My voice was weak, scratchy and hardly audible. I laid in silence and focused my thoughts on the advice of my voice and diction professor in college. She said that if you lose your voice, be quiet and don't talk. Your voice is telling you that you need a rest. I focused on that "rest."

I began to wonder if I would make my next arbitration date the following week. I had made a commitment to representing a PSE who had been unfairly removed for "failure to act in a safe manner." He has been waiting for 18 months for his case to

be heard. I wondered if his case, argued by my voice would be heard. I managed to make that arbitration date and I am still waiting for the award.

My quiet thoughts progressed. I had meetings with management lined up where my voice is used to argue and negotiate a long list of grievances. I wondered if my voice would be able to express the concerns of stewards and grievants that I take such pride in representing.

As I evolved in my thinking, I thought about my voice in a collective group of voices. Voices that have same and similar thoughts that all workers deserve respect in the workplace. All workers deserve a decent wage, vacation time and health insurance. I wondered if my voice would once again be able to express beliefs in our collective. My influence on the collective voice is important to me. Years of lending my voice to representing workers at the local, state and national levels for 28 years is significant to me.

The loss of that voice, your voice, workplace voices, reduces the mechanism

for dispute resolution and diminishes the rights of all workers. There are those who say my voice is loud and long, but I will always raise my voice on behalf of workers. My voice is just one of many, not ready to be silenced and still standing strong for all of you.

Take good care of your health, review

your TSP and your FEHB choices. FEHB open season closes 12/14/14. While I was in the hospital, I was not worried about my insurance because APWU health insurance took care of me.

May you and your family have a Safe, Healthy and Happy Holiday Season.



by Michael
O'Hearn,
National
Business Agent

NBA Report

Vote With Your Dollars And Cents (Sense)

I hope every union member voted in this last election. It is always very important to vote for representatives that will support working families and union causes. We did not do very well this last election. However, we can use this to motivate ourselves for the next election.

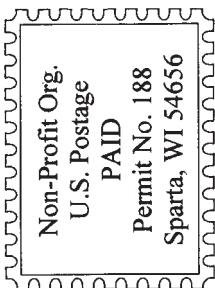
Still, there is a way for you to vote between elections. Use your buying power to support working families and unions. Spend your money on American-made products. This helps promote jobs in our great country. This lessens unemployment in our country. It helps to build our economy and reduces poverty. When people have good jobs, it makes their whole life better. Buy an American car, an American boat, an American pie or frozen vegetables. Your buying habits can be very powerful. Not only buy American, but also buy union made products or services. You can find out which products or services are union made by going to the internet. There are several websites devoted to listing union made items and services. The AFL-CIO has a list for making a Thanksgiving feast. It includes items such as a Butterball turkey, Ocean Spray cranberry sauce, Birds Eye vegetables, Pillsbury rolls, Sara Lee pies, Nabisco cookies. These are all union made products. You are helping someone keep a good union job when you buy these products. Just as you should encourage your relatives, neighbors, and friends to send their packages through the US mail, instead of Fed-Ex or UPS. We want good union postal jobs for our communities.

There is another way to look at this. We don't want to give our hard earned money into the hands of people who are trying to destroy our good union jobs. I think you should know not to buy anything at Staples. Staples is trying to take your job away. Don't shop at Walmart. The Walton family has been trying to eliminate unions for decades. They spend millions of dollars

in elections to elect right wing candidates that will further their anti-union agenda. They fight against unions by supporting "Right to work" legislation. I call these laws "Right to work a poverty level job." Walmart hires thugs to harass union organizers. Walmart blacklists employees who talk about unionizing. Again, don't shop at Walmart.

Another corporate entity to avoid is the Koch Corporation. The Koch brothers have been spending millions of dollars to do away with unions. They were behind the effort in Wisconsin to neuter the union contracts for state, county, and city workers. They hate unions with a passion. They also spend millions to support candidates who are anti-union. Therefore, don't buy their products. They make Dixie paper cups and plates. They make Northern bathroom tissue. Take the time to look at the labels on the items you are buying. If it says Georgia-Pacific, that is the Koch brothers. The Koch brothers have so many different brands. Look at any paper products label, like paper napkins or paper towels. Don't buy Georgia-Pacific Corp brands. In fact, you should always look at the labels on any items you buy. Who is making this product and where is it made? This is important information for you to make a decision about this product. Just this simple act if followed by all ordinary workers would bankrupt these anti-union companies. If you want to know more about items you should avoid, again go on the internet. There are several websites devoted to lists of items not to buy. The AFL-CIO has a web page concerning boycotts.

Staples is number one on their list. Therefore, use your money in a way that makes sense for working people. Buy American. Buy union made. Don't buy from our union enemies. Do this and you will be contributing to a happier tomorrow.



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