

Michigan

MESSENGER

APWU
APWU

Volume 44, Number 176
January-February, 2015

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Legislative Report | 2 |
| Maintenance NBA Report..... | 2 |
| The Contract Fight | 3 |
| Turney at the Table | 3 |
| Veteran's Report..... | 4 |
| Editor's Report..... | 5 |
| Retirement Involvement | 6 |
| NBA's Report | 5 |
| Maintenance Director's Report | 7 |
| Business | 7 |
| Remembering My Father..... | 8 |

President's Message



by Jesus M. Gonzales,
President

New Year, New Strategies

Happy New Year fellow Union Brothers and Sisters. As we begin this new year much is happening from the APWU Headquarters on down to the Local and Area Offices. I would like to applaud our National Officers on forcing issues through the grievance procedure that develop results for us in the field. As fast as the Postal Service is evolving, so is the American Postal Workers Union. Below are a list of changes coming,

APWU Contract Campaign:

What is a contract campaign? It's a mobilization approach to winning power and building the strength of our membership and hopes to recreate lost relationships from former members, as well as create new ones from new employees.

What a contract campaign does? The contract campaign is a member mobilization process of fighting for change. It necessitates engaging our members like never before, while at the same time reaching out to our numerous potential and real allies for mutual support. This means that we are not thinking about the union and its relationship to management

as largely focused around grievances, unfair labor practices, or even joint consultation. Using the contract campaign approach means starting to think about the union as an instrument to bring about a significant set of changes, including not only a change in the relationship between the union members (and potential members) and the union, but also the union and its relationship to the Postal Services mission.

A contract campaign also aims to alter that perception so that the union member comes to see the union as an instrument for positive change and not just an entity to address problems that the members may or may not have.

Why is this important? As I stated above, the APWU is changing and mobilizing its base like never before. If we refuse to adapt and change, we stand the chance to not exist.

As the beginning of a new contract set to take place in February of this year, a call to action will be needed from all of us to act. Please stay tuned.

APWUEGS:

Grievance processing in the 21st

century. Another opportunity of changing and adapting is before us, and the availability to tack and monitor your grievances will soon be at your fingertips. The APWU has invested into the next generation on how grievances are processed, tracked, and monitored.

For years this technology has built the strength of Union's goals for solid grievances, as well as monitor what is happening in the field. This should eliminate some of the redundancies that plague us during negotiating settlements throughout the grievance process. It's not a fix all, but helps us get better results in the grievance process.

Aside from grievances, job bidding and tracking also is focused in the APWUEGS system. Soon the APWUEGS system will be able to monitor and track all bids and allow the APWU to stay on top of ALL bids within a specified area or local.

We are changing, and the old ways of doing business are changing too. I look forward more to what we can accomplish together, then what and how the Postal Service may want to break us down.

"Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go act, and get busy"!

Legislation 2015

As our new Congressional leaders take the helm, our continued efforts to make a positive change for Postal Reform is at our fingertips.

A long concerted effort has thus far not produced action from Congress on addressing the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006. Over the holidays and into the New Year, we have made strides to develop relationships with many of the new Congressional Leaders, as well as re-identify the need for members of Congress who need to step up to the plate for Postal Reform.

With these efforts, along with contract negotiations, and the APWU's contract campaign, we hope to achieve a prosperous future for many more years to come. Engage these efforts, and assist us accomplishing these goals that lay the foundation for a brighter future.

In Solidarity
Jesus

The Case For Postal Banking

by Laura Clawson

Nearly 17 million American adults live in households where no one has a checking account; more than 50 million more have a checking account, but also have to rely on things like payday lenders and check cashing stores, according to a new report from United for a Fair Economy. These numbers include more than half of black households and nearly half of Latino households, and it takes a huge toll: these overwhelmingly low-income households spend around \$3,000 a year—more than 10 percent of the total annual income for many—on interest and fees to predatory fringe lenders, adding up to \$103 billion a year nationwide. But there's an easy answer to make affordable, reliable banking services available to most of these people: postal banking.

A new campaign has launched to press for postal banking, David Dayen reports, with groups like

Americans for Financial Reform, Public Citizen, and Interfaith Worker Justice joining with postal unions to press for this solution to the problem of predatory lending and to revenue problems at the Postal Service.

With over 31,000 branches and a high level of trust among the public, post offices, which already perform some financial services through money orders and international money transfers and used to offer savings accounts from 1911-1967, can fill the need for affordable banking alternatives by providing debit cards, savings accounts and even small loans. The physical reach of the post office is a major asset. "Thirty-eight percent of zip codes in this country have no bank; every one of those has a post office," the APWU's Dimondstein said. In contract negotiations slated to begin February 19, the APWU plans to demand postal banking as part of a menu of revenue-raising options. "Our position is to expand

and enhance postal services, not undermine them and degrade them," APWU president Mark Dimondstein says. "Financial services will be on the table, it's a significant area where we will have a conversation with the Postal Service management."

While seeking service changes is somewhat unusual in a labor contract, in this case, Dimondstein believes it connects directly to wages and hours for postal employees. Postal banking would be a win-win for low-income people, jobs, and anyone who likes to get mail—it would be a loss, though, for people who want to privatize government services and those who would specifically profit from weakening the Postal Service. Of course, we know how a typical fight pitting low- and middle-income people against the very wealthy usually turns out. But that's why it's important to actually make this a fight.

— reprinted from *Daily Kos Labor-*



President Jesus Gonzales
 W: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 528-9980
 e-Mail: cmalprez300@yahoo.com

Executive Secretary Michael Long
 U: (616) 977-1050; C: (616) 302-1409
 e-Mail: mdlblong@gmail.com

Secretary-Treasurer Darren Joyce
 W: (810) 257-1530; U: (810) 239-0931;
 FAX: (810) 239-6879
 e-Mail: fmail11@comcast.net

Dir. of Edca. & Research Lucy Morton
 U: (248) 543-3262; C: (248) 660-3139
 e-Mail: lucyapwu56@hotmail.com

Editor Paul Felton
 U: (248) 543-3262
 e-Mail: pdf111@comcast.net

Legislative Director Roscoe Woods
 W: (248) 543-3262
 e-Mail: apwusteward@hotmail.com

HR/Injury Comp. Director Ron Krumrie
 U: (231) 933-1020; C: (231) 409-4906
 e-Mail: Olcubman@aol.com

Clerk Craft Director Thomas Lothamer
 U: (517) 677-6198; H: (517) 639-4873
 e-Mail: tlothamer@msn.com

Maintenance Craft Director Sterling Bouier
 W: (313) 964-1398; U: (313) 226-8685
 e-Mail: sbouier@apwudetroit.org

Motor Vehicle Service Craft Dir. Joe Wrobel
 U: (248) 543-3262; W: (248) 546-7146
 e-Mail: yrubnu@hotmail.com

Veterans Director John Smeekens
 U: (248) 543-3262
 e-Mail: mpwuvetdirector@ameritech.net

Area 1 Director (480/481) Joe Wrobel
 U: (248) 543-3262; W: (248) 546-7146
 e-Mail: yrubnu@hotmail.com

Area 2 Director (482) Marcus Smith
 W: (313) 226-8685; C: (313) 663-0269
 e-Mail: dmarcothegreat@yahoo.com

Area 3 Director (483) Robin Ely
 W: (734) 697-0047
 e-Mail: relyapwu480-481@charter.net

Area 4 Director (484/485) Angelyn Gebstadt
 C: (810) 516-2970; U: (810) 239-0931
 e-Mail: fmalveep@comcast.net

Area 5 Director (486/487) Amy Owen
 W: (989) 422-4110; C: (989) 619-6054
 e-Mail: Dewdrop1972@gmail.com

Area 6 Director (488/489) Mary Stephenson
 W: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 980-6125
 e-Mail: mpwuarea6director@yahoo.com

Area 7 Director (490/491) Stefanie Murphy
 C: (269) 419-9322
 e-Mail: Spee65@aol.com

Area 8 Director (492) Wendy Kempke
 W: (517) 263-3795; C: (419) 377-4595
 e-Mail: kempke.wk@gmail.com

Area 9 Director (493/494) Lisa Borchardt
 C: (616) 706-1005; W: (616) 956-1072;
 U: (616) 776-1489
 e-Mail: Lisa.borchardt@ymail.com

Area 10 Director (496) Vince Nichols
 W: (231) 933-1020
 e-Mail: Vince00tc@yahoo.com

Area 11 Director (497) Laura Stafford
 W: (989) 732-6800

Area 12 Director (498/499) Theresa Granquist
 U: (906) 774-6303; C: (906) 396-6103
 e-Mail: tgranquist@att.net

P.O.W.E.R. Rep Jennifer Gilbert
 W: (616) 776-1542; U: (616) 776-1489
 e-Mail: Jennilee6@aol.com

State Retiree Chpt. President Al LaBrecque
 H: (989) 736-8173
 e-Mail: allab@sisna.com

MPWU Aux. President Vacant

MPWU Historian Vacant

MPWU Advisor Gary VanHoostraten
 H: (989) 894-2656
 e-Mail: hystreet@att.net w



by Roscoe Woods, Legislative Director

Legislative Report

A New Coalition

Hello Sisters and Brothers,
 As this new legislative session gets underway in Washington D.C. efforts are being made to undo the horrible attacks on service that were started shortly after the beginning of the New Year.

A hat tip to APWU national Legislative Director John Marcotte for sending this email blast just before we went to press:

New House Resolution Takes Aim at Delayed Mail

Just weeks into the 114th Congress, a new bipartisan coalition of a dozen U.S. representatives is taking a stand for prompt, reliable mail service.

In response to the disastrous decision by the USPS to slow the mail and slash service standards, Reps. Dave McKinley

(R-WV) and Paul Tonko (D-NY) today introduced House Resolution 54. H. Res. 54 expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the USPS should take all appropriate measures to restore service standards in effect as of July 1, 2012.

While the USPS has started their latest plan to reduce service standards and dismantle the postal network, nothing has yet been done that cannot be undone. Restoring 2012 service standards means that we can stop the slowdown of all overnight delivery of first-class mail and return to growing postal business within its existing network.

“We appreciate Congressmen McKinley and Tonko’s leadership on securing the future of America’s public postal service,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “We call upon all APWU activists to send the message that mail matters and take ac-

tion in support of this resolution.”

Your MPWU state leadership working with your local leadership has already begun contacting lawmakers here in Michigan to get additional signatures needed to get this very important piece of legislation on the floor for a vote – and when it does arrive there ensure we have the votes to get it passed.

We will be in Washington D.C. in early March to press our message face to face with our members of Congress.

Stay tuned and stay ready to write, phone, email and fax your representatives and your Senators when your leadership requests. The speed with which this has come up is an indication we are being heard, we just need to press on and continue to apply pressure.

In Solidarity,
 Roscoe



by Curtis Walker, Maintenance NBA

Maintenance NBA Report

Reducing The Backlog

Finally the Greater Michigan district has arbitrators to hear Maintenance cases. I will make it a priority to schedule as many Maintenance cases as possible over the summer months. For the last year when no arbitrators were available Management refused to even discuss these cases as there was no fear of having to settle them. DIR McKinnon has negotiated pre-arbitration meetings between me and a senior headquarters Labor representative. The first of these meetings took place right before Christmas. Many favorable settlements were made and there are tentative agreements in the works with meetings scheduled in February and May. Not all of these cases will be able to be resolved so get your Locals ready to hear the cases you have pending arbitration.

The backlog of grievances in the Great

Lakes Area pending Step 3 meetings is quickly dropping. I have established an expedited meeting system to move these cases past Step 3. This backlog has stagnated to the point that the Service has no choice but to negotiate the easy stuff and move the rest into arbitration. It is my goal to have these cases appealed and then negotiate with the local labor reps who are motivated to clear their dockets.

As the Service rolls out their 4 walls initiative I foresee more Maintenance impacts to be announced. These impacts will mostly affect larger offices that are still processing mail. Things to look for when these impacts are sent out: Are BEM, building side MM7s and custodial employees identified as being excess? These positions have nothing to do with the processing of mail and therefore should not be affected by this initiative. Your best

tool to combat these impacts is a copy of your most current staffing packages. I have also noticed a Management trend of completing custodial staffing packages aligned with the 4 walls program.

Custodial staffing packages can only be redone if there is a significant change in the building or method of cleaning. If they attempt to change a staffing package, ask if the square footage of the workroom floor that is made available by the machines being shut down will be turned into storage instead of workroom floor. If no change is made in what the floor space is categorized as then no change can be made to the staffing package.

Postplan has affected Maintenance staffing also. Simply put, if an APO has subordinate RMPOs attached to it then the APO becomes the lead facility that includes the RMPOs as part of the entire new installation. In accordance with the MOU starting on Page 404 of the CBA these facilities are now an installation and if the sum of these offices equals 1 full person for custodial cleaning then none of these offices can be contracted out and the work must be brought back to the bargaining unit. Please be diligent in seeking out these possible new duty assignments as there may be a place for an impacted employee to land.

Always Union,
 Curtis Walker
 (952) 854-0093 • cwalker@apwu.org

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 | |

The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.

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



THE CONTRACT FIGHT

Make Our Cause The People's Cause

This article is reprinted from the national magazine of the APWU . . .

The APWU is gearing up for a major battle: The fight to win a good contract for our members, while we fight for a vibrant, public Postal Service for the people of the country. Negotiations are set to begin on Feb. 19, three months before the current Collective Bargaining Agreement expires on May 20.

Contract negotiations are always contentious, and 2015 will be no exception: Postal management is using a manufactured financial crisis to justify its disastrous "cut to survive" strategy, and many in Congress and on Wall Street are eager to dismantle the USPS so they can turn over the profitable pieces to their cronies in private industry.

"Despite the obstacles, I believe together we can win a good contract," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

"To be victorious, we will have to conduct our fight for a good contract very differently than we have in the past," he said. "Negotiations will still

go on at the bargaining table, but to be successful we must win support from the people of the country for our goals – good, stable postal jobs and a strong Postal Service that belongs to them. As postal workers, we understand that the demise of a strong, public Postal Service would mean the end of our jobs.

But we must take that understanding a step further.

"We must make sure the people of the country realize that dismantling the nation's postal system doesn't only harm postal workers," Dimondstein said. "It also robs the people of speedy delivery of their medicine, their online purchases, local newspapers, bill payments, letters and invitations. And it robs communities of a vital public service, secure jobs, a strong tax base, and important infrastructure.

"We must make sure the people understand that our great national treasure has the potential to expand hours and

services – to include postal banking, licenses and Internet services.

"To win support, we will need the active involvement of all APWU members – not just stewards and officers," he added.

"We will ask all union members to

"We will have to conduct our contract fight very differently than we have in the past."

speak out about the threat to the public Postal Service and how a contract that protects good jobs can also protect local post offices. We will ask members to take the message to community meetings, the places where they worship, and small business groups in their cities and towns."

In 2012, the Chicago Teachers Union defied the odds and won a strike by uniting the demands of teachers with the needs of the students and parents they served, Dimondstein observed.

For decades, the United Farm Workers union has won battles by taking their case to the people.

"We are not alone," he pointed out. "Walmart workers are rising up, and fast food workers are demanding a living wage," he added. "Our demands – like theirs – are just. And like the workers at McDonalds and Walmart, to win, we must take our case to the people of the country and ask for their support."

"We also must make sure we are united within our own ranks," said Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, who is helping to lead the contract campaign. "We must make sure that more senior workers understand the importance of improving conditions for PSEs, and that new employees understand the importance of protecting retirement benefits. And we must strive together to end the three-tiered wage structure that divides our workforce."

In the weeks ahead, union activists will call on their coworkers to get involved by joining Contract Action Teams, wearing stickers, buttons and t-shirts, and spreading the word to neighbors, friends and associates.

Will you answer the call?

Turney at the Table



by **Linda Turney, National Business Agent**

Contract Action Team (CAT)

February 19, 2015 is opening day for APWU contract negotiations. We don't have much time to mobilize our membership and friends in our community to support our cause. We can do this by mail, social media, internet, community actions and face to face communications. Your help is

needed to build a contract campaign. This means getting members involved. Ask a member to pass out flyers, write letters to the editor of your local newspapers and tweet our cause out on the internet.

"Americans of all ages, all stations

of life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations . . ." Alexis de Tocqueville Democracy in America 1835

It is our time to form associations and allies to work towards a good contract.

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

I went to the Contract Action Team (CAT) training in St. Louis. Congratulations to Local 480-481 who sent a big local contingent that actively participated in the training. The training had many dimensions concerning Networks and Groups, Trust and Solidarity, Collective Action and Cooperation, Information and Communication, Social Cohesion and Inclusion and Empowerment and Political Action.

We did a group activity concerning editors interacting with Unionists to get our message out to the media. Paul Felton has some good ideas with regards to sending out letters to friends about the Postal Service and asking them to write others concerning our struggle. This is a good way to network through the US Mail. This is a way of multiplying our APWU message through the communication networks of family and friends.



Contract Action Team training in St. Louis

Veterans' Report



by John P. Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Camp Lejeune Water Update

The law was signed on December 16, 2014. Veterans and their families who lived at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987 may be eligible for VA health benefits. The December 16, 2014 law changed the eligibility date from **January 1, 1957 to August 1, 1953. Veterans;** Enroll online or call 1-877-222-8387 for help.

Family members; You may be eligible for reimbursement of out-of-pocket medical expenses for 15 conditions. Apply online or call 1-866-372-1144 for help.

Visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune to learn more.

Check Your 6!!!

The following information is factual. I spent 30 minutes speaking with an FBI Agent in their Macomb County office to verify if this was a hoax or if it was real. **I'TS REAL!!!**

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

Subject: SITUATIONAL AWARENESS - 01DEC14: (INITIAL) FBI Bulletin to Current and Former Military Members, Nationwide, DTG 01DEC14 / 1318 EST

Incident or Event Details:

The FBI is advising **current and former members of the military** to review their social media accounts to avoid posts that might attract attention from the group calling itself the Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) and its supporters. The FBI and DHS notes that the Islamic State group already has publicly encouraged attacks against law enforcement and military service members. The bulletin includes a concern that ISIS members are "spotting and assessing" individu-

als in the U.S. who they believe may be interested in carrying out attacks on US soil against members of the U.S. military.

Where: Nationwide

I was told by the Agent that there was already an incident in Canada. Their concern is what some Veterans and Active Military are saying on public media systems and social accounts about ISIS and others groups. He stated that many Veterans and Military drive around with decals and bumper stickers on their vehicles, and many wear shirts, jackets, caps, and whatever else, proudly displaying their Service to this Great Country. There have been threats by

Coburn (R-Okla.) put a hold on the bill, citing cost considerations. The SAV Act was considered non-controversial in the House, and passed that chamber by voice vote the previous week. This critical legislation would have begun to address the crisis of veterans' suicide by allowing VA to hire more psychiatrists, collaborate with local non-profit mental health organizations, and expand successful peer support networks. The SAV Act was named after Clay Hunt, an OIF/OEF Marine from Texas who became active in the veterans' community after leaving the military. After years of battling PTSD, Clay tragically took his own life in 2011. Veterans groups strongly supported the SAV Act

"The FBI advises veterans to avoid posts on social media that might attract attention from ISIS."

ISIS, and similar groups, that may wish to harm law enforcement and military service members. If you experience a problem, contact your local FBI or DHS and they will investigate it for you.

Check your 6 and reach out to your Brother & Sister Veterans if necessary. We're Family!

Prescription Tracking

VA recently implemented a new tool that allows veterans to track the delivery of their VA prescriptions through My HealthVet. This tool grants veterans the opportunity to track their medication refills online, 24/7, without having to rely on calls to their VA medical facility for status updates. VA reports that more than 4,000 veterans currently use the prescription tracker every day. Read more: https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/resources/jsp/help.jsp?helpDirectRequest=VA_Prescription_Tracker_Learn_More.html.

Bill Blocked from Passage

The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act failed to pass the Senate after Senator Tom

when it was first introduced and shortly before it hit the Senate floor. Because the Senate adjourned before the procedural hurdles could be overcome, the bill never came to a final vote. Please contact your political representatives, after they reconvene in January, and ask for its reintroduction and passage in the 114th Congress. In my own opinion "citing cost considerations is #%*)\$#@%@*) %#*&, considering the Veteran put their life on the line for this Country and it's \$*@ *@\$% politicians."

Oops SAV Update: The Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act has been reintroduced in both the House and the Senate. The bill's sponsors, Representative Tim Walz (D-Minn.) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) want to ensure that the SAV Act remains a top priority for the 114th Congress. To watch Senator Blumenthal's Press conference on the SAV Act, go to: <http://www.nbconnecticut.com/news/local/Veterans-Support-New-Push-to-Reduce-Suicides-287716211.html>.

Million Veteran Program

Over 330,000 Veterans have joined the Million Veteran Program (MVP), a partnership between VA and Veterans to establish a database of information which may lead to preventing and treating illnesses in Veterans. For more information about participating in the MVP visit, www.research.va.gov/mvp or call Toll Free, (866) 441-6075.

Toxic Ft. McClellan???

Veterans and civilian workers who worked at Ft. McClellan, Alabama between 1935 and 1999 were exposed to a number of toxic chemicals. At any given time, Ft. McClellan had a

population of 10,000 people. 5,000 were permanently assigned and 1,500 civilians were employed. The base closed in 1999. Currently, the Alabama National Guard operates Ft. McClellan, where the National Guard Officer Candidate School takes place. The Department of Homeland Security's Center for Domestic Preparedness is also housed on base. Those who were at Ft. McClellan from 1935-1999 experienced toxic exposure from: Agent Orange, Agent Blue, Sarin, VX, Uranium, Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) and Trichloroethylene (TCE). **What does this mean for our veterans?** It means they have been exposed to toxic chemicals without knowing it. They are beginning to have serious health issues without knowing the root cause of the problem. Cancer. Tumors. Leukemia. Kidney failure. Malignant Melanoma. Fetal death and miscarriage. Problems with short-term memory. These are just a very few of the side effects. A website at <http://www.fortmcclellantoxicexposure.com/apps/photos/photo?photoid=161423393>, is dedicated to helping Ft. McClellan Veterans with a page dedicated to the symptoms caused by each of the known toxins.

Wheelchair Veterans

Do you know a Veteran who is confined to a wheelchair? Please pass this information on to them. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is accepting applications for the 2015 National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Registration began in early January and will close April 15. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is a sports and rehabilitation program for military service Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems. Each year, hundreds of disabled Veterans travel from around the country to compete in the Games, which is the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. With them, they bring the fighting spirit and tenacity that defines the Veterans of our Armed Forces. Competitive events at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games include air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, hand cycling, a motorized wheelchair rally, nine-ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting and weightlifting. Athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age. The 2015 National Veterans Wheelchair Games will take place in Dallas, Texas, from June 21-26. The Games are cosponsored by VA and Paralyzed Veterans of America, VA's partner in this annual event since 1985. For more information, please visit www.wheelchairgames.org.

DEADLINE
The deadline for
articles for the
March-April issue of the
Michigan Messenger
is March 9th



by Paul
Felton,
Editor

Editor's Report

Your Role In The Contract Campaign

A few years ago, Chicago teachers went on strike. They didn't fight the battle alone. They conducted a contract campaign. They convinced the parents that the union was fighting for a better education for their kids. They got the community on their side. With the added support, the strike was successful.

Back in 1997 there was a national Teamsters strike at UPS. They ran a contract campaign and they got the public on their side. They won the strike.

Postal workers are fighting not just for ourselves, but for the public's mail service. If we can get the public on our side, we'll have a better chance of getting a good contract.

The Chicago teachers and the Teamsters at UPS could not have run their campaign without active involvement of rank-and-file members. The members of those unions were not "special" in any way; they were no different from postal workers. These unions didn't have a tradition of asking members to go out into the community. They had a new leadership team that was committed to a new strategy, which involved changing the culture of their union. Just like the APWU today. The once-passive teachers and Teamsters became organizers. Not all of them, but enough to make a difference.

The Attack

The American public likes the Postal Service. We rate highest among government agencies in surveys. We deliver more mail to more addresses at a cheaper rate than most countries in the world, including those that have privatized. But special interests are trying to degrade the service, and the top management of USPS is on their side. The decisions to close plants and to eliminate Tour One at the plants that remain are not stupid decisions. Their goal of eliminating door-to-door delivery and move to cluster boxes is not stupid. The attempt to get rid of Saturday delivery is not stupid. These measures go beyond stupid; they are a deliberate attempt to sabotage mail service so the public will not object to privatizing our work.

Our Goal

If the APWU contract negotiations involve nothing more than two teams of expert negotiators sitting across the table from each other, then we have no leverage. If it goes to an arbitrator and all we have are the best logical arguments we can make, versus the USPS lawyers, the arbitrator will listen – but will also

be influenced by the trend throughout the country of low wages and attacks on benefits. Our goal is to have the contract process taking place in an atmosphere in which the public is clamoring for service to be restored and expanded. In other words, we want the public on our side.

Is This Possible?

On one level, it should be easy. Just look at the facts. The Postal Service takes in more money than it shells out. There's

"Postal workers are fighting not just for ourselves, but for the public's mail service."

no reason to cut back service. We have natural allies all around us, if we just reach out to them. For example:

1) The labor movement. An obvious ally.

2) Civil Rights groups. The Post Office historically has provided opportunities for people of all races.

3) Veterans groups. An attack on the post office is an attack on veterans.

4) Seniors. People of the elder generation don't often feel comfortable paying bills over the internet. But if it takes an extra couple of days for the bill to reach you and an extra couple of days when you send it back, you're cutting it pretty close.

5) Small business. Good paying jobs in every community gives residents money to spend in small businesses. Also, many small businesses rely heavily on mail service and they don't get the preferred treatment that large mailers do.

Creative Ideas

"The members of my Local are apathetic. They'll never get involved." I've heard many an Officer say that on the national teleconference calls. I don't agree with that defeatist attitude. Instead of talking about what we can't do, let's talk about what we can do.

We can't expect the vast majority of our members to become activists right away. We can involve those members who are very supportive in their attitude but are not active. The best approach is to find ways for your core of activists to reach out to some rank-and-filers and ask them to do something they feel comfort-

able with. Like wearing a sticker.

Or here's a novel idea. Activist A approaches coworker B and asks B to send a letter to one friend. Just one letter. B's letter would simply say "I'm mailing this letter at (time) on (date). Call me when you receive it." When B's friend calls, B will explain the ridiculous moves management is making, that caused the letter to arrive late, and what the union is doing to fight back.

Several conversations took place in that scenario. A talked to B about the union's strategy. B explained to the friend about the cutbacks in mail service. They used their own words. A and B both in their own way, acted as leaders on a small scale. Suppose B is someone who's losing a bid because their shift is being eliminated. B will be more than happy to explain to the friend "I'm getting screwed and they're screwing up **your** mail service." This little exercise doesn't take much time, but A and B have now placed a little energy into the campaign. They will be more likely to come to a rally after these conversations, and maybe B's friend will come also.

You might also keep a tally of the response times for these "B to B's friend" letters. Let's say for 100 letters the average time was 3 1/2 days. You might want to go to the media with these facts, explain the reason for the delay and what the APWU is doing to fight back.

The first steps, in any case, involve

building awareness of the campaign within the Local, and in the community, and identifying members who will play an active role. These members can canvas the workplace to see who is active in block clubs, veterans groups or other organizations that we might want to address. If a member does nothing more than arrange for someone from your Local to speak to their club, they have played a positive role.

Another novel idea – this one involves Congress. Usually all we do is write letters and/or visit to convince them to vote the right way. If we have a friendly representative, we thank them. But we should ask more than that from a friendly rep. Can we speak at a town hall meeting that they call? Or can they disseminate some material we provide to their constituents?

We want to simultaneously reach out to allies in the community and expand the awareness and level of involvement of a significant portion of the membership. If we do our work right in the first weeks of the campaign, we will be in a position to hold a mass rally in late April or May with a lot more people and spirit than previous rallies.

None of these ideas represent *the formula* to be copied by every Local. They are my personal ideas, offered in the hope that it will encourage creative thinking in other Locals. But three things I am convinced of. 1) This overall approach is absolutely necessary if we are to get a good contract, 2) Those Local leaders who say this will not work because members are too apathetic need to change their own attitude, and 3) If you put a real effort into this approach, your Local will be stronger for years to come.



Retiree Involvement



by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

"Show me a good loser, and I'll show you a loser!"

—Leo "The Lip" Durocher, H.O.F.
Baseball Manager

Maybe it's the 35 years on football fields, 28 coaching, accounting for my competitive nature. The only thing to be learned from losing is how not to lose. I'm advised that my column subsequent to the 2014 APWU National Convention ruffled some feathers on high. There were criticisms of my harsh assessments, one prompting a letter to the editor of my home Local "Flint Facts," suggesting that I tone it down. Okay, I admit to employing some colorful adjectives describing the opposition to our retiree initiative Resolutions. In my view, it was no less offensive than the actions of the opposition to Retiree Involvement on the convention floor. Tit for tat. I call 'em as I see 'em and make no apologies. Both as Central Region Retiree Delegate elected by retiree members of 13 states, and as MPWU State Retiree Chapter president, I'm accountable to represent retiree best interests, and to furnish the unvarnished facts as they happened. The opposition would ungraciously have us to believe they were acting in the best interests of the Union as a whole, and we were not.

We lost that round, not overwhelmingly, and we were heard. It's also my nature not to suck up to anyone for the sake of peace or to curry favor, whether it was management or to those in higher Union office. Dad drilled it in to me that they pull their britches on one leg at a time just like I do. That said; those

issues are merely on the backburner, simmering, stirred occasionally to be reworked for the next round in 2016 while we move on to current events and issues needing our attention. I may not be a good loser, but I can be a very gracious winner if given the opportunity.

Mark Your Calendar! The 2015 MPWU Education Assembly, June 4-6, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI, and the APWU All-Craft Retiree Dept. Conference, October 12-14, 2015, Bally's Hotel, Las Vegas. Local Chapters are urged to prepare now to send as many delegates to these educational opportunities as possible. Details will be forthcoming. The State Chapter is again proposing to sponsor a "COPA for Pizza" hospitality night, and offer a lineup of valuable classes. We will also be conducting the State Chapter's Executive Board meeting during the Ed Assembly. Stand by for details.

CAT - Contract Action Teams. APWU is asking retirees and the APWU Auxiliary to join in activities primarily to educate the mailing public that contract negotiations begin in mid-February addressing the future of their Postal Service. This Union administration was elected largely over the last contract provisions on a promise to fix it, and now it's time to deliver. We all want to see an always improved contract, and we know management will be proposing takeaways to muddy the waters. Retirees have demonstrated stepping up to APWU's calls to arms and will again. Local Retiree Chapters are encouraged to coordinate with your Local Union's plan of action. Better yet, Local Unions should be inviting their Local Retiree Chapters to participate.

Retiree leadership residing in rural areas far removed from their home

Local can participate with Letters To The Editor in local daily or weekly newspapers. It's been suggested that the APWU Communications Dept. furnish op-eds to Chapters and Local Unions in the field that we can tweak to fit the readership. We need the talking points so we look like we know what we're talking about. We can address groups like local NARFE chapters, regional UAW retiree councils, friendly groups like County Democratic Parties. There are various ways to spread the APWU gospel. Sitting on our hands isn't one of them!

2014 General Elections. Or, sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald! That happened in November too! What just happened?! HOW could it happen? Any good losers here? When two-thirds of the eligible electorate stays home bad things happen. The minority allowed to rule the majority, and in this case it's the hard right in the driver's seat even after all the GOP has done: obstructed in the U.S. House, proposing to "reform" Social Security by handing it over to Wall Street, turning Medicare into a voucher system where you can purchase coverage from your friendly insurance company, downsize COLA increases with a "chained CPI" for seniors. The only saving grace was the election of Senator Gary Peters-D who joins with our senior Senator Debbie Stabenow-D, champion of postal workers. I'm embarrassed that Michigan is a "Right-to-Shirk" state and Labor didn't respond in kind to prevent re-election of the very people who stuck it to us! Some "blue state" we are!

On the state level I'd like to know where were the teachers and AFSCME members who were disenfranchised by the Snyder administration? Where were the retirees whose pensions/annuities were hijacked? At what percentage did these "special interests" vote, and how did they vote? How did our own APWU members vote? Our immediate past history of anemic APWU national officer election ballot returns mailed directly to members doesn't lend much confidence that we voted any better.

Plenty of blame to go around, from the Dem Party leadership at national and state levels, to Organized Labor leadership. There's numerous examples of failed strategies in this past election where raising funds were more important than getting out the vote resulting in good candidates edged out. I'm disturbed that like the Clinton administration, the Obama administration has kept organized labor at arm's length. It makes one dream of a third Party, a Labor Party, but that would only divide and aid the GOP who walk in lockstep. Between now and 2016 we need to concentrate on getting out the vote or

continue to suffer the consequences. Did YOU vote? If so, HOW did you vote? It all begins at the grassroots . . . you and I. There's no excuse for not voting short of being so incapacitated as to be unable to cast an absentee ballot.

The Consequences. Addressing a meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, very conservative Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) made it crystal clear that this Congress is targeting entitlements; Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. We're well aware of their so-called "reform" proposals that reach right into our pocketbooks. A revival of the chained CPI is lurking right around the corner. No longer are we waging the struggle for gains, but are in a defensive battle to keep what was achieved, and it's far more serious than ever before. The enemy is at the gates! That's not crying wolf. When will the working class ever learn we have the power of the ballot, and that we must vote our pocketbooks above all else. If we continue to fail in that simple truth, then all else won't matter.

Obamacare. The Affordable Care Act doesn't directly affect postal/federal workers as far as coverage is concerned. It may have some impact on future FEHBP premiums IF Congress keeps hands off. But, Medicare eligible seniors, and those approaching 65, should be aware that Medicare premiums have remained static at \$104.90 per month the past 3 years! Previously, you could count on an annual increase. This is a direct result of the Affordable Care Act! Do we seniors want to see "Obamacare" repealed? Every one of the lockstep Republican Members of the U.S. House do and now they have the majority in the U.S. Senate. Our one remaining hope the next 2 years will be the President's veto pen, and that's not a given.

"1+1" FEHBP Option. The 1+1 option will be available in 2016. That is; enrollees with a spouse, or just one other person covered under their FEHBP health plan, has this option instead of having to be enrolled in the Family option for coverage. Now, one would expect a significant reduction in premiums for 1+1 enrollees. But, not so fast my friends! All that glitters isn't necessarily gold. A recent NARFE magazine article put a damper on that assumption, cautioning that may not be the case. Stay tuned.

Organizing the Unorganized. Postal job numbers, especially APWU represented employees, are down . . . Way Down! So are the numbers of eligible employees belonging to the Union that represents their best interests. That person working next to you, or within the four walls of your facility, who refuses

continued on page 7

Congratulations

Congratulations to the Detroit District Area Local Retiree Chapter on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of their charter; to President Al Fouche, V.P. Betty Littsey, Secretary Jane Duggan, Sister Regina Favours liaison to Michigan ARA for the Local and State chapters, and DDAL Retiree Chapter members as the first Local APWU Retiree Chapter organized in Michigan. That was the first step toward the eventual organizing of the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. In order to establish a state chapter, the state must have three (3) organized local chapters. The DDAL Chapter, followed by organizing the Western MI Area Local and Flint MI Area Local Retiree Chapters, enables the MPWU State Chapter to mark its 15th anniversary of being chartered as the 2nd organized State Chapter in the APWU, this year. Credit the Detroit District Area Local Retiree Chapter for getting the ball rolling, and to whom we wish continued successful Retiree Involvement!

Gratefully,
Executive Board, MPWU State Retiree Chapter



by Michael
O'Hearn,
National
Business Agent

Just three days ago, I opened up a Facebook page. Facebook is a part of the Social Media. I wanted to do this for some time, but never got around to it. I was in the hospitality room at the Illinois Postal Workers Education Conference and Tina Scranton from Quincy, IL helped get me on Facebook. Thanks again Tina. For those who don't know, Facebook is a way to connect with others. The Union is an organization that tries to join people together to reach certain goals like better wages, better working conditions, and a better quality of life in general. Getting members connected helps the Union toward these goals.

As soon as I opened my Facebook page, I got all kinds of people wanting

to friend me. Friending someone on Facebook means connecting and sharing information with them. I started friending fellow Union members. However, other kinds of people like family members and friends also friended me. The kind of information shared is quite diverse. I posted some photos of me and my one and only granddaughter, Lucy. She is now five months old. She is very cute. Of course, I am biased. I got a bunch of "likes" and positive comments about these photos. My daughter shares platonic statements like "Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up." I agree. My son does movie reviews of movies he doesn't like. My nephew does evaluations of different kinds of soda pop. Susan Boyd, good Union activist from Land of Lincoln Local, sends me interesting Union articles and pic-

tures. My good friend Linda Turney sends me group selfie photos of her and Union members at events and conferences. Although she does not have long arms, she is an expert at getting great crowds of people in her selfies. I got information from Ed Mauer from 604-605 Local about his union brand "Union Thugs." He sells items like T-shirts with this logo. Ed shared in a class at the Conference that on one day in December he received over one million hits on his page. He gets hits from all over the country and also around the world. This is just fantastic. Imagine reaching over a million union members. Wow, that is connecting in a big way.

The point is that part of accomplishing our Union goals involves communicating and connecting with

our fellow Union members. All members can't always make it to the local Union Meetings. A face to face communication is the best form of connecting. However, this can't always happen. Years ago Unions realized this and published newsletters like this one you are reading now. This helped spread the word to a greater audience. Now, with the advent of the internet, this is another tool for Union members to get and give information with each other and stay connected. This gives the membership a chance to stay involved with our Union. In turn, this makes us a more powerful Union. Therefore, I encourage our Union members to get on the Social Media and connect. I encourage all APWU members to look me up on Facebook (Mike O'Hearn) and friend me. Thanks.

NBA Report

Facebook As A Union Tool



by Sterling
Bouier,
Maintenance
Craft Director

Hello fellow MPWU/APWU members and friends. I'm sure everyone across the state is experiencing changes as a result of the expected service standard changes by the Postal Service. Although these changes may be necessary, it is our job to ensure that these changes take place correctly, that the contractual obligations required are being followed, and the rights of our members are being protected.

In the maintenance craft, we are experiencing excessing to the needs of a tour/section, changes in start times, changes in non-scheduled days, changes in work duties, and removal of mail processing machines.

In order to protect and justify our jobs, we need to ensure we are documenting the work we perform properly and more importantly, the work not being performed or bypassed. Work not being performed or bypassed shows a need to create more positions in the long term and a need for overtime in the short term. We also need to ensure that the operational maintenance required on the machines when running is being performed and the time is being allowed to perform it.

I could go on and on about different and various issues because they are consistently and constantly oc-

curing in the maintenance craft. Instead, I ask that anyone who requires my assistance, please feel free to con-

tact me. I welcome your questions, issues, and any concerns that need to be addressed. I continue to stand for

solidarity and to fight for and protect the rights of our members! In Union Solidarity.

Maintenance Craft Director's Report

Monitoring The Changes

Retiree Involvement

continued from page 6

to pay their fair share, with their hand in your pocket, is not your friend. They are a scab, plain and simple. Scabs drag all of us down, and management exploits it. This only applies to active postal workers on the rolls, NOT APWU retirees. Unless employees on the active rolls are ALL IN we're doomed to failure in all our initiatives, starting with contract negotiations. Fodder for another column.

While the residual Retiree Involvement internal issues of discontent in the wake of the 2014 National Convention remain simmering on the backburner for the time being; it's evident that the preview of coming State and National Union events, the overview of an unfriendly political climate, criticism of epidemic voter apathy related herein, plus hopefully some valuable information, signals that after being sidetracked the past several months . . . I'm back! Let me leave something to ponder by announcing my view of a "Dream Team" Presidential ticket; Bernie Sanders-President, with running mate Elizabeth Warren for V.P.! Both champion the working class, who fully comprehend

and support our postal issues. So maybe it ain't gonna happen, but unless something changes between now and the 2016

Democratic Presidential Caucuses, that will be my vote! (*editor's note: mine too!*) Be Strong!

— Business —

The following quotes are taken from Funny Times

What is a crook but a businessman without an office?

— Brendan Behan

Congress voted for tougher laws on corporations. So now when a corporation buys a Senator, they need a receipt.

— Jay Leno

These CEOs are scary. I walk past a gang banger, I don't flinch. But I see a white dude with a Wall Street Journal, I haul ass. Cutting through the projects, you might lose what you have on you that day, but I've never been robbed of my future.

No thug ever said, "Give me your 401-K, your college fund, your IRA, I want it all."

— Wanda Sykes

The primary function of management is to create the chaos that only management can sort out.

— Theodore Dalrymple

The human being who would not harm you on an individual, face-to-face basis, who is charitable, civic-minded, loving and devout, will wound or kill you from behind the corporate veil.

— Morton Mintz

Remembering My Father Who Fought For Union Benefits

by John Dick,
NALC Branch 3126

This article is reprinted from New Hampshire Labor News. The author is a carrier in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Yesterday was a milestone for me. Not a day of sadness as much as a day of reflection. January 12th, 2015, was the fifth anniversary of my father's death. His demise came suddenly. A massive heart attack, then poof; he disappeared from our lives. I remember vividly getting the phone call from Big John. I was setting up my route and my phone kept ringing over and over. I was too busy to answer the damn thing but something didn't feel right. I answered the fourth time John called. "You have to get to the hospital right away. Something's wrong with Bob." I dropped my mail and rushed to the emergency room. My heart sank and then shattered into a million shards when the doctor told me, "There was nothing we could do." I felt like an orphan.

Bob "Moses" Dick was a proud union man. He had worked at the Ford Utica Trim Shop for thirty years. From 1963 to 1993 he sewed seats for the automobile giant. He was not a fan or a great example of what you might call the "work ethic." He

told me many times as I was growing up that his bosses and even the Ford family only cared about what he could do for them, and he was sure enough gonna return the favor. He said "I got a contract with those folks. I do my thirty years sewin' those goddam car seats, and in return I have a decent paying job and a secure retirement. I don't have to like them, and they don't have to like me. Don't ever fool yourself, son. You're just a number to

gap between the richest and the poorest is dramatic. Many companies no longer make promises to their workers. My employer, the United States Postal Service, still does. But I have to wonder "For how much longer?"

Our Postmaster General, Patrick R. Donahoe, is retiring in February after a nearly forty year postal career. He started as a mail clerk and worked his way up to the head honcho position of the Service. At a recent speech at the National Press Club honoring his retirement, I was shocked to hear these comments from him: "Most young people aren't looking for a single employer over

the course of their careers. In today's world, does it really make sense to offer the promise of a government pension to a 22-year-old who is just entering the workforce? And how reliable is that promise?"

Postmaster Donahoe went on to say what the future of the mail would look like. He said "It will not be a person putting a piece of mail in a blue mailbox, but rather a far leaner organization, with a smaller workforce and less generous health care and pension benefits, that competes for e-commerce business, on-line advertising and other Internet based services." It is hard to imagine these comments being made from a man who spent his entire career at one organization. Guess he wasn't wearing his party hat at this retirement dinner!

Postmaster Buzz Kill made some other parting shots at the postal unions for single-mindedly fighting to preserve jobs and benefits and the myopic shortsightedness of the mailers for trying to keep postal rates affordable. Rumor has it he kicked a dog and pushed an old lady before the speech was over. For those of us who have been trying to understand the decisions and direction this man has taken the Postal Service over the last several years, this one speech wrapped it all up in a tidy package and put a bow on it for us. He is a true believer in the "New America," where workers have no guarantees or contracts and bounce from job to job every few years. This is the philosophy of our very own Postmaster General.

In February, Megan Brennan will become the new Postmaster General. She has shattered the glass ceiling at L'Enfant Plaza and will become the first female to assume that position. I hope she has differing aspirations for what is possible for the United States Postal Service and its workers. We are the nation's second largest employer, and we are vital to this nation's economy. The "twenty something's" I work with deserve a promise from our employer for the hard work they do every day. This is not a job; this is a profession and a career.

A photo of my old man sits on the shot glass shelf of the bar I have in my basement. I will do tonight as I have done many nights in the past; I will raise a glass of strong libation and toast to his memory and honor. The toast will be one of his favorites and I will look at him with a salty tear in my eye; "God Bless the Union!" And for good measure, "Work sucks!" **Sad to see you go, Donahoe . . .**

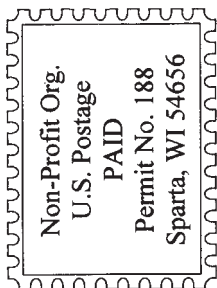
"Rumor has it he kicked a dog and pushed an old lady before the speech was over."

them. A cog in the wheel. I don't give them any more than I have to."

He would regale stories to me and my brother about working at the plant. He was outrageously honest, and claimed to have the worst discipline record at the Trim Shop. His temper was legendary, and if he thought a supervisor was acting prickly it was not unusual for him to threaten the health of his bosses. According to Pops, at one discipline meeting his exasperated steward exclaimed, "We have no defense for his actions. We plead insanity!" He loved the UAW, but I am not sure the feeling was completely mutual.

He was proud when I became a letter carrier on October 7th, 2000. The first question he asked me was if I had joined the union. He loved reading my *Dick-tations* column and we had him added to our mailing list so that he would receive his own personal copy. He said something to me about my writing that I will never forget. He said I was profound. It was not his style to talk in that way, and all I could say was "Thanks." His death was premature at the age of 70, but he at least was able to retire at the age of 54 and enjoy 16 years of a Ford pension.

Much has changed in the five short years since my father died. Michigan is now a right- to-work state and America is sliding backwards from the promises it had made to previous generations. The middle class is stagnating economically and the wealth



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