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Right To Work Hurts Everyone

by *Chris Czubakowski,*
Milwaukee Area Local APWU

“I’m a supporter of the labor laws we have in the state of Indiana and I’m not interested in changing any of them—not the prevailing wage law and certainly not a ‘Right to Work’ laws we have.”

— *Indiana Republican Governor Mitch Daniels*

“Rick Snyder is a bridge builder. He refuses, for instance, to enter the fight over a controversial right-to-work law, recognizing that the fissures such a proposal uncovers are not worth the potential benefits.”

— *The Grand Rapids Press, Sept. 18th, 2010*

Both Republican Governor Mitch Daniels (Indiana) and Governor Rick Snyder (Michigan) signed ‘Right to Work’ legislation into law after months of phony lip service in their respective states. As of today, twenty-four states have passed ‘Right to Work’ legislation. Historically, these anti-union states were in the south and west but after the Republicans won sweeping victories in 2010 (and the subsequent historic gerrymandering that followed in that census year) right-to-work laws regained momentum in the United States.

Fast forward to 2014. Days after the November election, an organization called “Wisconsin Right to Work” took to the airwaves promoting ‘Right to Work’ legislation. The group is run by a former operative of Americans for Prosperity, the Koch Brothers political front organization that funnels millions in campaign contributions to Governor Walker and the Wisconsin GOP.

Since then, countless other plutocrat extremists and their dark money groups have joined this effort as they seek a return on investment from the most gerrymandered and loyal GOP Assembly and Senate that their money could buy. Who’s calling the shots here is obvious!

Thus, as this article goes to press, it’s not a surprise that the Wisconsin GOP is fast tracking ‘Right to Work’ legislation. Meanwhile, Governor Walker is continuing with his own phony “I’m reluctant to support Right to Work” lip service reminiscent of Governor Daniels and Snyder.

Don’t be fooled. While the Governor won’t stake out a clear position on ‘Right to Work’ his track record on this issue speaks volumes. His entire career has been based on pleasing his corporate right wing extremist donors. In fact, in 1993 Walker cosponsored legislation that sought

to turn Wisconsin into a ‘Right to Work’ state.

It’s important to know that ‘Right to Work’ is not what it seems. It is a power grab by CEO’s and corporations seeking to use their money and BIG GOVERNMENT to “stamp out” unions in order to “stack the deck” even more in their favor. It’s a power grab by the same Corporatocracy that ships our jobs overseas and then offshores their profits to avoid paying taxes (while shifting that burden to the rest of us). And Yes, their meticulous “Right to Work’ agenda comes at the expense of the wages and benefits of workers.

The advocates of these laws are trying to

“It’s important to know that ‘right-to-work’ is not what it seems.”

trick us. ‘Right to Work’ legislation is cleverly disguised and wordsmithed as a law that will actually help workers. The truth is it does nothing but depress wages and benefits in order to increase corporate profit margins/shareholder dividends and consolidate political clout. The laws are specifically designed to cripple union activism and stifle union political opposition to things that are detrimental to working people. The extremist spin on this is that ‘Right to Work’ gives workers more “freedom”. However, under ‘Right to Work’ workers are only “free” to be freeloaders.

That is because state ‘Right to Work’ laws stop employers and employees from negotiating a type of agreement-known as a union security clause that requires all workers who receive benefits of a contract to pay their share of the costs of representing them (including higher wages, benefits, training, education, safety and protection from unfair discipline). This means that if a worker who is represented by a union (but doesn’t pay dues) is fired, the union must still use its funds, time and resources to defend the worker the same as if he was a member.

Currently in Wisconsin, private businesses and employees can freely negotiate to make sure everyone who benefits from a union contract pays their fair share of the costs of obtaining and protecting those wages and benefits. But a state ‘Right to Work’ law would allow BIG GOVERNMENT to interfere in the freedom shared between a private business and its employees and

restrict the right of that business to negotiate with their employees. Shouldn’t employers in the free market be allowed to negotiate the terms of employment with their employees without BIG GOVERNMENT intrusion?

Mountains of evidence reveal that under ‘Right to Work’, all workers, union and non-union, also take an economic hit. According to data from the U.S. Department of Labor, workers in ‘Right to Work’ states have a consistently lower quality of life than in other states. This includes lower wages, higher poverty, less access to health care and poorer education systems. Why should our state adopt a losing strategy that lowers the standard of living for our workers and their families? What’s so appealing about the standard of living in backwater ‘Right to Work’ states like Mississippi and Alabama that we should want to become like them?

The GOP controlled state legislature should focus on strengthening our economy and making sure it works

for all Wisconsinites instead of pandering to billionaires that are obsessed with self-serving political and social engineering. The policies of this pandering have not been good for the state. Wisconsin continues to trail thirty one other states in job creation and is suffering from an enormous loss of revenue. As such, we have a current year budget deficit (that we didn’t have in January 2011) and a larger deficit looming in the 2015-17 budget than we had in the 2011-13 budget. Any talk from Governor Walker and his spokespeople on AM radio about how “our budget is better off than it was four years ago” is simply not true.

A three decade strategic assault by the Corporatocracy and their political minions has dramatically weakened unions. This has kept middle-class wages virtually stagnant while the wealth of those at the top has multiplied more than any time in American history. Thus, the income gap between rich and poor is also at a historic level. Under the regressive policies of this “Second Gilded Age” powerful corporate bosses have now replaced those mythical union bosses of long ago. The difference is these wealthy corporate bosses couldn’t care less about working people.

It’s up to workers ... all workers, to decide whether or not they want to come together and hold those at the top accountable. Opposing “Right to Work” laws would be a good first step in the right direction.

— reprinted from *The Hi-Lites*



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by James Stevenson,
National Business Agent

NBA Report

Discrimination

Article 2I of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, sex, creed, religion, national origin, age, or marital status. It is also illegal to discriminate against an employee due to disability.

EEOs are based upon Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, religion, sex (gender/including sexual harassment/pregnancy), disability(ADA), age (40 or older-AD-EA), and genetic information (GINA).

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 prohibits discrimination against employees for a current pregnancy, past pregnancy, potential pregnancy, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth which includes scheduling for "breastfeeding."

An employee may file an action under Retaliation if they have engaged in prior protected activity or served as a witness. An employee must demonstrate that the adverse employment action they received was due to their protected activity and they must establish what is referred to as a "causal nexus." There are times when an employee may lose the initial case of discrimination but may be successful on a retaliation claim.

An employee can file a discrimination grievance under Article 2 of the CBA and also file an EEO. "A settlement of an EEO claim does not automatically render moot a grievance on the same issue." JCIM page 24. In regards to union stewards or officials representing employees in EEOs (redress, informal or formal procedures) I would recommend that when signing any documents that you do so as an "Individual representative" and do not indicate your union position under your title. The reason for this is due to liability issues and you do not want to have to overcome

an argument on whether or not the union was signatory to the EEO proceeding thus withdrawing the grievance. If the EEO settlement resolves both issues and does not conflict with the CBA (or impede upon other employees contractual rights) the union may agree to be signatory.

A big difference between Article 2 and the EEO procedures surface in the areas of timeliness and remedies. Under the CBA an aggrieved employee has 14 days to file a grievance; under EEO an employee has 45 days to file. As it relates to damages, under Article 2 an employee typically requests lost wages, benefits, cease and desist, and made whole. Under EEO an employee may request "equitable or compensatory damages" which include "pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages." Pecuniary damages are items such as lost wages, benefits, and basically out of pocket expenses. Non-Pecuniary damages include but are not limited to mental anguish, embarrassment, anxiety, humiliation, etc. The limit under EEO is \$300,000 with the exception of Front Pay damages (Front Pay damages are not subject to the cap).

Front pay damages may be awarded if the workplace environment is so hostile it prevents an employee from returning. Front Pay is money awarded for lost compensation for the time period between when the judgment is rendered and reinstatement. Potentially if it is not feasible (hostile work) for an employee to return to work an award could be made all the way up to retirement eligibility even though the bar is extremely high to meet this threshold. Although, you may often hear the word "punitive damages" federal law prohibits punitive damages against federal agencies such as the Postal Service in EEO actions.

YES, YOU CAN USE A SUPERVISOR OR MANAGER AS A COMPARABLE EMPLOYEE.

Whether you are filing a grievance under Article 2 or filing an EEO you may use records of supervisors or managers as comparable employees. As it relates to Article 2 of the CBA the threshold element falls under Article 19 which covers handbooks and manuals. Many regulations which are incorporated under Article 19 apply to both bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees. Issues such as attendance, conduct, fraud, theft, delay of mail, etc. are universal and apply to all employees. If a supervisor or manager has committed a violation of the same or similar nature as to which you are being charged you may use them as a comparable as long as that difference between you and the supervisor falls within a recognized protected category. Under Article 16 you can still use supervisors as comparable due to the "just cause" principle even if discrimination does not exist.

We all know how supervisors and managers can be charged with the same violation as an employee and very little to no discipline will materialize.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals rendered a decision in Walleon BOBO, Plaintiff-Appellant, v. UNITED PARCEL SERVICE, INC., Defendant-Appellee. No. 09-6348. Decided: January 9, 2012 which enforces this right.

You may also use employees in other crafts as a comparable such as carriers or mail handlers. The main idea is that all employees who are subject to the same workplace rules and regulations should be treated equally. Do not allow an EEO counselor or anyone else convince you that you cannot name management officials as comparable employees. Remember, a comparable employee does not have to be similar in all employment aspects, only in all of the "relevant" employment aspects (Ercegovich v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.)

FMLA Actions

I will not be doing an exhaustive review of FMLA rules but I would like to make employees aware that FMLA violations are not just violations of the contract but they are also violations of federal law. An employee has the right to file a complaint with the Department of Labor (Wage and Hour division) and can even file an action in federal court when the employer violates their FMLA rights or retaliates against the employee for utilizing FMLA. In Schultz v. Advocate Health, No. 01C-0702 (N.D. Ill. June 5, 2002) a jury awarded

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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.



by Thomas
Lothamer,
Clerk
Craft Director

Clerk Craft Director's Report

— It's A Push —

Throughout the life of this current contract, the language has been agreed, argued, appealed, re-negotiated, interpreted, sustained and violated. The one feeling I keep getting when discussing so many issues on so many levels is the Supervisor has to listen to the Postmaster, the Postmaster listens to the POOM, the POOM listens to District, District listens to Area, Area listens to National and then the cycle starts all over again.

This Service which is constitutionally bound to serve the American public is exhaustingly mismanaged. Offices are extremely short-staffed in the Associate Offices both in the Clerk Craft and the Maintenance Craft. Function 4 budgets appear to be done remotely these days along with Maintenance staffing packages. They do not and could not accurately reflect the amount of work which is not being properly recorded to justify the need for additional staffing.

We need more career positions many of which should be full time. Management circumvents our language by hiring PSE's who should be career, and

by reduction of operationally necessary window hours, cleanliness of our facilities, improper recording of management performing bargaining unit work hours and withholding jobs due to plant closures.

We have clerks on detail getting paid "higher level" when our contract is clear about Lead SSDA (level 7) pay when the operation of these smaller offices (level 20 and below), level 20's do have or should have level 7 clerks regularly by now. Many of my brothers and sisters out there working in an office that is remotely managed by another office are agreeing to the "management pay" they are receiving when unsupervised when our contract speaks about the correct pay Level 7 Clerk and correct clerk credit for these offices. This should be addressed locally by our members. Level 7 is 58 cents more per hour than level 6, the office gets the proper clerk credit, 1.6b violation language which addresses management performing bargaining unit work is severely diminished and easily complied with. So it is hard to understand the push back when this is addressed at the Local, District, or Area level. Such a simple resolve to such a

common problem. The other day when it was addressed at the District level they pushed it to the Area level. Really? You can't make a decision on such a simple thing?

Management spends more time and money on avoidance of the issues, maybe in some strange way to secure their positions. If everything that is decided at the National level was complied with then our hopes for negotiations would be more enthusiastic but the Postal Service is continually giving us the push back. We have all of these employees hiring in as PSE's when they should be career, PTF's who should be Full Time, PTR maintenance not given enough hours to secure the safety and health of our buildings.

Management lies, cheats and steals from us on a regular basis. If we had a roommate who treated us like this we would look for a new place to live. Well, that's the catch; our livelihood depends on their decisions. Newsflash, they are not your friends, they seem friendly at times but are just puppets on a string or so it is claimed. "I don't want to reduce your hours but I am being instructed to

keep the hours down." "I would love to make you full time but am being told I can't due to the hours allotted for the office." "I wish my PSE were a career employee but this was approved at a higher level. "The list goes on and on. I represent on most levels for the Associate Offices from Supervisor to District Managers and the answers continue to be the same. "We will have to ask our superiors." I'm sorry, isn't this a contract? Agreed at the National level! Article 15 Section 2 (b): "In any such discussion the supervisor shall have the authority to settle the grievance."

One would think this wouldn't be so complicated. Some things are coming along and it is easy to understand that some managers are straight shooters but there is so much more work to be done. Constant communication, more boots on the ground, more compliance from managers at all levels. This would be nice. The work is being done but there is so much more to do. Fight for your hours, your pay, your livelihood. Don't settle for excuses or scapegoat explanations. Question everything because it needs the resistance. Let's not make our Contract, our Union, our Future, be a push.



by Sterling
Bouier,
Maintenance
Craft Director

Maintenance Craft Director's Report

Open Season

Hello MPWU Brothers and Sisters,

Let us begin our talk about open season. Maintenance In-Craft Open Season occurs every three years since March 1, 2009. Beginning March 01, 2015 **maintenance craft employees** who are not on a promotional eligibility register(s), may apply for inclusion on the appropriate promotional eligibility register(s). Notification will be posted on the bulletin board on or before March 01, 2015. The employees who apply will receive the results of their application(s) no later than one hundred fifty (150) days from March 31, 2015, provided the applications have been properly completed by the applicants. It is best that any maintenance employee has test scores and qualifies for any/all positions they may ever be interested in. This is your opportunity to apply and test for all available positions. If excessing occurs at your facility, you can only be moved to jobs that you are minimally qualified for. If you have a passing test score or are on a promotional register, you are minimally qualified for those positions. Always keep that possibility open just in case.

If you have previously taken an exam for a position and received either an eligible or ineligible rating, then you can update under the RMSS process. Employees under the Revamped Maintenance Selection System (RMSS) shall be permitted to update by retaking the in-craft RMSS process no earlier than 120 days from the generation of their last MSS rating. Upon such request, the employer shall have thirty-seven (37) days to complete the process including **notification of the result to the employee**. The promotion eligibility register shall not be updated during the period of time a vacant position is in the register in order of qualifications, and all positions for promotion awarded in accordance with the procedures established in **Section 5, Article 38**.

One last thing. Please ensure that your PAR's are up to date and reflect the job assignments that you desire. If you have an old PAR in and forget about it, you may be slotted into a position that you no longer desire. If you are put into a position and you do not wish to move, submit a blank PAR to reflect your desire to stay in your cur-

rent position and avoid an unwanted position being awarded to you.

As always, feel free to contact me, if you are in need of my services. I am

here to serve. I pray everyone is happy and prosperous in the New Year so far! Until next time.

In Union Solidarity.

Discrimination

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\$11.65 million for FMLA violations. An employee who is already dealing with a serious health issue or covered circumstance should not have to fight the employer on a recognized condition or be fearful of utilizing FMLA.

In closing, I would like to say that I am pleased to be your new NBA

replacing Lynn Pallas-Barber and look forward to doing my best to represent the great Postal Workers of the States of Illinois and Michigan. Everyone in the Central Region Chicago Office (Sharyn Stone, Linda Turney, Mike O' Hearn, Merle Bell, and the secretaries) has been exceptional in my transition.

In Solidarity.

DEADLINE

The deadline for articles for the
March-April issue of the
Michigan Messenger is May 11th



by Paul
Felton,
Editor

Editor's Report

A Growing Movement

In the past, what role did the APWU member play as the contract expiration date approached? A passive role. We sat back and waited and hoped that the national leadership could negotiate a tentative agreement that we would like enough to vote to ratify.

In the past, what role did the various APWU Locals play in this process? The same passive role as the members.

In the past, what role did the rest of the labor movement play? And what role did community activists play? No role.

It was simply our "experts" sitting across the table from the USPS "experts." And we had very little leverage.

Opening Day

No, I'm not talking about the Tigers' first game of the season. I'm talking about the first day of national negotiations. Who was there? Richard Trumka, National President of the AFL-CIO. Fredric Rolando, President of

the NALC. National leaders of CWA, AFSCME, and AFGE were present. So were Actor Danny Glover and populist commentator Jim Hightower. And the A Philip Randolph Institute and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. All of these folks are on our side. Part of the Grand Alliance. Under the slogan "Good Jobs, Good Service."

We are building a movement and spreading the message that APWU is bargaining not just for ourselves, but for the American people. On a national level, more than 60 organizations have joined our coalition. That includes all four postal unions, as well as the National Association of Postal Supervisors. It includes the AFL-CIO and a number of national and international unions. It also includes an impressive array of diverse groups. I'll list a few for the purpose of encouraging Locals to contact similar groups in your community...

Center for Rural Affairs. (Also Farm Aid and National Farmers Union.) The APWU stands strong against at-

tempts to close rural post offices. We should organize in rural areas for support.

National Consumers League. Our stand against the service cutbacks and for expanded service benefits the consumer.

Vote Vets Action Fund. I'm not familiar with this organization but I know that veterans groups have an interest in supporting our contract fight. Not just for the benefit of the tremendous number of veterans who currently work for the Post Office, but because we are fighting for a vibrant USPS that will continue to hire, thus providing veterans returning from overseas with an opportunity for a job at a living wage.

Alliance for Retired Americans. Senior citizens rely on USPS. Many elderly folks are not comfortable paying bills on the Internet, so reliable mail service is critical. And for those who live alone, it is comforting to have a regular mail carrier who will notice if anything goes wrong with them. (Alongside this

article on page 5 is the first draft of a locally developed flier for use by retiree chapters.)

National Council of Churches. (Also Progressive National Baptist Convention.) I applaud these religious leaders for taking a stand for the benefit of the American people, and we should encourage local religious leaders to do the same.

Seminar

On February 19th, the 480-481 Area Local held an organizing seminar to kick off our campaign locally. We heard presentations from the Wayne State University Labor School and members of our Local Contract Action Team. We plan to mobilize our members and reach out to the community to the best of our ability. I urge readers of the *Michigan Messenger* to play an active role in your community.

This time around, we don't have to be passive observers at contract time. This time around, we can really make a difference.



by Michael
O'Hearn,
National
Business Agent

NBA Report

Contract Negotiations

Our present contract expires on May 20, 2015. Negotiations for a new contract began on February 19, 2015 in Washington DC. I attended the National Executive Council

Meeting in Washington DC at this same time and was present for the opening day ceremony of the contract negotiations.

Our National President, Mark

Dimondstein, gave a presentation to the national officers about the upcoming negotiations. Some of the issues that he will be putting on the table include NTFT work assignments and the erosion of full-time work, the problems of subcontracting (truck routes, bringing private mail sorting back in house, and the Staples problem), and providing new services to the public such as postal banking, notary services, licensing services, and more product sales. The APWU will also address PSE problems such as creating a clear path to career employment, raising the pay scale for PSEs, increasing benefits for PSEs, and addressing problems concerning PSE overtime. Of major concern during negotiations will be plant closings and consolidations. Our President asked Management to issue a moratorium on plant closures for the entire length of the negotiations. We are requesting a reversal of the lowering of the delivery standards to the public. We want to improve window service by having more window clerks man the counters to provide better service and increase window hours to make the service more user friendly. A

major focus will be on improving the grievance-arbitration process so that the backlog of grievances can be reduced and cases can be resolved quicker. We want to improve safety in our work places. A proposal was made to change the way the USPS alters Handbooks and Manuals so that disagreements about these changes can be resolved quickly. These are just some of the issues that we will presented to Management. As you can see, there is a lot on the table for discussion.

President Mark Dimondstein is asking for all our members to give their moral support to the negotiation team. Go to the national website (www.apwu.org) to get more information on how you can help. Our President is asking all members to show your support by wearing the stickers that proclaim "Good Service, Good Jobs", because we are not just fighting for our members, but also for the American public and a better Postal Service. You can get these stickers from your local. This new contract will be a difficult one to successfully negotiate. Therefore, our team can use all the support we can give them. Thanks.



Stewards at 480-481 Area Local Seminar for the contract campaign.

Thoughts From One Of Our Customers

by John "Cementhead" Dick,
NALC Branch 3126

Captain Roy is one of my special patrons. He is one of Michigan's greatest fishing enthusiasts, and operates a home based business selling specialty fishing lures and other items to fishing enthusiasts all over the world. His story is very special and dear to my heart and over the years I have used him in many of my Customer Connect service talks to carriers all over the Detroit area. I have been his carrier for the last few years, and before that my wife delivered the daily mail to his house (she is now retired). He is part of my extended "postal" family.

The Captain does not have the use of his legs. Because of his somewhat surly attitude, his moniker is "Hell on Wheels." A self-confessed chain smoking curmudgeon, he takes his online business seriously. He operates two websites selling his fishing doodads. Sitting in his wheelchair, in front of his computer, in the comfort of his home, he is able to send hundreds of packages a week with the help of the United States Postal Service. He makes one trip a day to the local post office to drop off the shipments ordered from the day before. When I come around in the afternoon to deliver his daily mail, I knock at the door. He always hollers "Come In," and I twist the unlocked doorknob. He hands me a few envelopes ready for delivery because he does not like to keep his customers waiting. Twice a day he is

shipping with the USPS. This goes on six days a week.

He lets me know when he has the occasional problems with his shipping orders. We share tracking on certain packages and he has always told me that he knows with the volume he sends, there will be a glitch here or there. He is cool with some imperfection. After all, he is Captain Roy and I am Cementhead. But in recent weeks, he has more than the occasional problem. In just two days, three packages just "disappeared." I checked the tracking myself. First class, EBay labels, pristine laser jet printing and even one of them picked up and accepted by me. Just gone, off the radar. Here is his email sent to me: **In the past 60 days I have shipped close to 1,000 packages and spent over \$3,500 in USPS postage. If I had to guess I would say I have an issue with 1 in 20 packages. Now, most are slow times but maybe 1 in 100 do get lost. Some eventually do make it there but as far as EBay is concerned if it has no tracking for 7 days it's a loss and I have to fix it. So it might as well be gone for good. This may not seem like a lot, but depending on the product I can out a week's worth of profit and I'm not in the business to make anyone else money but me.**

I forwarded his concerns to my postmaster and our customer service liaison at our post office. He was not happy with the response from our postmaster (I cannot in good taste reveal what the Captain said) but he did ask me something very specific about the response from the customer service rep. The term "Network Rationalization Plan" was used as a possible reason for the delays in his first class package mailings. It was explained that the Postal Service was in a "transitional period" causing some longer than expected delays. Also, the Captain was told the Postal Service was working to stabilize the First Class delivery network in the midst of this transition, to lessen any negative impact on its customers.

To which the Captain replied: **Well, after doing a little research I can absolutely agree that this Network Rationalization Plan is the cause of all your issues. No one could think you can close that many facilities and let go of that many workers without having a lot of issues/problems and I can only imagine these issues will persist when you try to do more with less. For this reason, I have been shutting down my EBay account and will focus on consumer shows and**

retail events where I do not have to depend on the USPS. I see no reason to continue to be blamed for your actions and since your problems will obviously get worse not better as you move forward with this Network Rationalization Plan I think I'm making the right decision. And the fact that you call this "Rationalization" cracks me up. I guess that's better than calling it "fire a bunch of people and lower the quality of service just to save a buck".

Captain Roy always ends his email transmissions with this message. Help a handicapped angler live his dream. I don't want him to give up his dream, or give up on the United States Postal Service. Go to www.agrandalliance.org to stop the delay of America's mail.

I have a hard time believing Captain Roy's experience is an isolated problem. If any of my fellow letter carriers have stories to share of customers experiencing first class mail problems, please share them with me at [www.dickjohn@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dickjohn@sbcglobal.net). I will make sure your stories get forwarded to our branch president for proper review. It is our duty to SAVE AMERICA'S PUBLIC POST OFFICE.

The Contract Fight

by Paul Felton

As we negotiate our contract
Postal workers are under attack
They're giving too much of our
work away
And the mail we handle they try
to delay

These issues will not be resolved
Unless the members get involved
Because that's where our power lies
With active members and allies

Like seniors and civil rights groups
Vets and our returning troops
Building solid unity
Throughout the whole community

A movement growing by the hour
Therein lies our union's power
Fighting not just for our pay
But also to improve the way
That we give the public we serve
The kind of service they deserve

So join the fight, what do you say
Everyone has a role to play
Join the fight, it is the way
To bring about a better day

Why Should Senior Citizens Support Postal Workers?

Did you know...

The Postal Service does not receive a dime of taxpayer money.

The Postal Service had an operating profit of over a billion dollars last year.

Postal management is cutting back on service in ways that will harm senior citizens.

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU), along with other unions and community groups have formed a Grand Alliance to preserve good jobs and good service.

The APWU contract expires May 20th. We are bargaining not just for our own wages and benefits, but for quality mail service.

Management plans to close 82 processing plants this year. A letter mailed in Lansing to an address just across the street will no longer

be processed locally and delivered the next day. It will be sent to Pontiac and take 2-3 days to travel across the street. In Pontiac, and plants across the country, they are practically eliminating the midnight shift, moving employees to day shift and afternoons. The midnight shift gets mail sorted and out to the carrier for delivery in the morning. Now it'll have to wait another day.

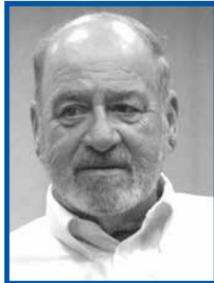
The APWU Strategy

APWU is fighting these cutbacks. In contract negotiations, we are demanding that these cutbacks be reversed. We want USPS to provide more service to the community. We want to make it harder for management to close a post office that serves your neighborhood. And the alliance we build will fight attempts to eliminate door-to-door delivery in favor of cluster boxes (meaning you'd have to walk a block or so to pick up mail that used to come right to your door).

The current and proposed future postal cutbacks hit senior citizens harder than most. Many of us don't feel comfortable using the Internet to pay our bills, and the delays in processing mail could cause our payment to arrive late. If we have to walk some distance to get our mail every day, that could be problematic for many of us. The same could be said if they eliminate the nearest post office and make us travel further to handle postal issues.

The Alliance includes National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), Alliance for Retired Americans, as well as Jobs with Justice and about 60 other national organizations. The Alliance will continue past the contract to fight to protect the Post Office from those who would dismantle and destroy it. So please join us in the continuing struggle for good jobs and good service.

Retiree Involvement



by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

"There is no greater calling than to serve your brother, and no greater satisfaction than to have done it well."

Walter P. Reuther

Charles E. "Charlie" Kolhoff 2/22/1933 - 2/14/2015. Charlie definitely served his Union, Retiree Chapters, Saginaw 486-487 Area Local, Sisters and Brothers very well, indeed. He was an MVS Local officer retiring with 35 years' service. Charlie was a State Retiree Chapter Trustee 14 years. Charlie was the most loyal Union Brother I've ever known, and am glad I said it while he was still living.

Charlie was a Korean War veteran, but rarely spoke of it, then only briefly. His obituary read in part; "...He enjoyed travelling to Houghton Lake with family and enjoyed feeding squirrels and birds. He loved going to the casino on his birthday..." Charlie loved to travel to APWU national conventions and All-Craft Retiree Dept. Conferences in Vegas.

When Charlie's sidekick Jerrold "Jerry" Clairmont called that morning with the sad news of his passing, countless "Charlie moments" ran through my thoughts. One of the first was at the 2014 Mackinac Island State Retiree Chapter Convention later in the day after he had lost his reelection as trustee. I saw him sitting alone in the coffee shop looking forlorn and went up to him with words of consolation. In true Charlie fashion he assured me it was okay and would continue to be active in his home Local and Chapter, never once mentioning his defeat after 14 years. That's the man he was. I thought about the photo of Charlie, Patty Miller (Flint), and me on our scooters at the L.A. national convention when we were dubbed the "Three Amigo's". Or saw him struggling with a huge old yellow suitcase almost as big as he was, travelling to and from a Vegas conference, and Michelle giving him a hand telling him to have his kids get him one with wheels for Christmas. He did get one, but never said who bought it for him.

Charlie had 3 children, a son, victim of a homicide that really weighed on him, a daughter Sheila and son Jack. Charlie would call every couple of weeks, mostly just to talk, maybe ask for information on something, or as in one of his last calls during the holidays when he got around to expressing his fears over impending carotid artery surgery. It was obvious that Charlie was lonesome so I would just let him

ramble while I ate my dinner, kind of holding his hand as we often did at Union events. We all should have as good a heart, a pure and loyal Union heart, as Charlie Kolhoff. I'm honored to have been his friend and already miss his calls. We were blessed to have you, Brother! "Eternal rest grant unto Charlie 'O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace." Amen.

Social Security Turning 80! Thanks to FDR signing S.S. into law in 1935,

"Yes I'm still a Democrat but I'm not a blind Democrat."

we need to make sure it continues to have birthdays into the future. Not that it's going broke as the GOP privatizers would have you to believe with their "Chicken Little" propaganda, but endangered by those in Congress who would "fix it." S.S. has a \$2,8 trillion (with a "T") surplus with a full benefits payout the next 18 years and 80% thereafter. When, and if, a friendly Congress has the courage to remove the income cap of the very wealthy so they can pay their fair share; we can not only extend the life of the S.S. trust fund, but expand benefits for the majority of Americans. They could start by enacting the CPI-E that most accurately measures senior's market basket determining Cost Of Living Adjustments. We have to be smart enough to recognize and reject GOP and their Wall Street funders' efforts to divide us over who should receive S.S.; pitting young against old and retirees vs. disabled workers by manufacturing a phony S.S. crisis. Legislation is where it's at, both good and bad!

Missing! Check it out. APWU Constitution, Article 8. Section 6.(a.). Discovered over 2 years ago; language describing duties of the Human Relations Dir., specifically; "retirement programs", disappeared between the 2010 and 2012 Amended APWU Constitutions without benefit of a Resolution requiring a two-thirds vote in convention to amend. We don't have a problem deleting those duties prescribed in the 2010 Constitution, but that it is done properly via resolution and vote of delegates in convention.

Likewise missing at this writing are materials necessary to answer the APWU Headquarters call for retirees to join in Contract Action Teams (CAT's) to bring the message to the American mailing public that APWU is negotiating to save their public postal service. One of the first proposals is to reinstitute postal

banking. During two teleconferences, it was pointed out that Chapters and retirees in rural communities would be most effective if the Communications Dept. developed op-ed's that can be used as Letters to the Editor in mostly weekly, some daily, newspapers. We can address citizen groups; i.e. UAW Regional Retiree Councils, NARFE Chapters, political Party meetings, County Commissions, for example. But, we need talking points guidelines and possibly handout materials so we know we look like we know what we're talking about. What works for large Locals, metropoli-

tan areas with CAT's, doesn't apply out here. APWU strategists need to think outside the Wash., D.C. beltway box. One size doesn't fit all.

Other than receiving a fistful of stickers which I slap on all our outgoing mail, those of us living in the hinterlands are disarmed. APWU strategists for messaging the public as a means to gain public support for successful contract negotiations have to understand that some of us have to drive 35 miles to a supermarket, 10 miles to a gas pump, through the woods and farm land. We'll help APWU if APWU will help us help APWU. Ready, willing, and somewhat able.

I'm a Democrat! From the time my 6 kids were able, I taught them to pound their little fist on the table and pronounce; "I'm A Democrat!" It was at once cute, and indoctrination. The older I get, the less enamored I am with Democratic candidates, politicians and legislators, and yes; my President and Democratic Party. The Party of the people! At least that's the way it was for my Mom and Dad's Dem Party and my early years of Union Involvement. In my view, the Dem Party and some candidates we endorse and even elect have increasingly kept organized labor at arm's length. To be honest; the Clinton administration did labor no favors with NAFTA and GATT. This Obama administration is advocating the TPP, the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement. NAFTA on steroids, as one legislator described it.

In our own case, the Obama administration had an anti-senior "chained CPI" in their previous budget proposal, removed after a gray power uprising. It's been rumored that elimination of door-to-door delivery is in Barack's 2015 budget. Go figure!

Even a former candidate for state

office, who was backed by the Lansing Dem power brokers over my County Dem's preference, was recently quoted at an area Party gathering as stating that unions are becoming irrelevant and that perhaps right-to-work was not such a bad idea since people "up here" (meaning northern Michigan) resent union workers. He went on to say; that "downstate" union money was trying to influence issues that aren't important to northern Michigan. With Dems like that who needs republicans?! Yes, I'm still a Democrat, but I'm not a blind Democrat. Organized Labor built the middle-working class. As Unions have declined, so has the middle-working class. Organized Labor has been legislated to become irrelevant, and we elected them! I've gone so far as to express my concerns with MDP Chairman, Lon Johnson that; I'm a Union man first, a Democrat second. As an elected delegate to the MDP convention and Alcona County Democratic Committee treasurer, I can do that.

We in Organized Labor need to stand up within the Dem Party to demand we return to our labor roots and principles. That we thoroughly vet every candidate for their labor knowledge, views and principles. FYI: the Alliance for Retired Americans urges us to contact our Congressman/woman to reject the "fast track" TPP proposal. MI ARA warns seniors that TPP has provisions that affect drug pricing. TPP could interfere with the government's ability to list and price prescription drugs and allow pharm companies to challenge drug pricing in public programs including Medicare, Medicaid, VA Health Services, among others. TPP has many disturbing tentacles. What's most disturbing is the proposal to "fast track", expediting the process to give the President authority to negotiate the agreement and only allowing Congress an up or down vote. Legislation is where it's at!

Notables: The Alliance for Retired Americans has joined with over 60 organizations and Unions to launch "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service". Did you know that Michigan has the longest fresh water shoreline in the U.S., and when in Michigan you're never farther than 80 miles from a Great Lake? Did you know there is a 1,098 mile 30 inch oil pipeline commissioned in 1953 that comes from Superior, WI passing under the environmentally sensitive Straits of Mackinac connecting Lake Michigan to Lake Huron and down to Sarnia, Ontario? It's Enbridge Line 5. It's also Enbridge that had the Kalamazoo River spill and reportedly another in

continued on page 7

Veterans' Report



by John P. Smeeke,
Veterans
Director

The Oscars

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald issued the following statement on the Oscar win for the HBO documentary *Crisis Hotline: Veterans Press 1*. "We are pleased that this film has highlighted the challenges our Veterans can face, and the work of our dedicated Veterans Crisis Line staff, to save lives and get Veterans into care. We are hopeful that this documentary will help raise awareness of this important issue with the American public. Our Veterans in crisis need to know that there is hope, and asking for help, makes them stronger."

Signed by the Commander in Chief

The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act was signed into law, further complementing VA's on-going, multifaceted efforts to improve mental health care for our nation's Veterans. The suicide rate is lower for those Veterans who use VA health care. For this reason I ask that if you know a Veteran, please encourage them to go to <http://explore.va.gov/> to explore what Benefits are available for them. If you know of a Veteran in crisis, urge them to call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net, or send a text message to 838255 to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care.

Dramatic Drop in TBI

The number of new cases of traumatic brain injury fell to 92.7 per month in 2014, down from a peak of 588 per month in 2008, according to reports from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center. The report counts diagnosis during a medical visit or hospitalization either during a deployment or within 30 days of returning from a deployment.

VES Exams

Veterans Evaluation Services (VES) has been awarded contracts with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to provide medical disability examinations for compensation and pension purposes. However, many veterans who receive appointment letters from VES are not showing up for exams because they aren't sure of the legitimacy of the letter. VES handled Compensation &

Pension exams throughout the world for the Department of Veterans Affairs, handles exams for veterans in 49 states and all U.S. territories. In 2014, VES conducted approximately 80,000 VA exams; only 3 percent of those were returned for re-examination. The normal turnaround time is 21 days or less for VBA exams, 26 days for VHA exams, 35 days for Integrated Disability Evaluation System cases and 45 days or longer for exams conducted overseas. Veterans who are contacted by VES need to report to the exams;

the training. Those who meet the standards and graduate from the course will receive a certificate and the Ranger tab. The training will start on April 20, 2015, and the Women will be part of Ranger Course 06-15. The program will last almost 2 months. When they earn that elusive Ranger Tab, they might not get an immediate assignment to a ground combat unit, at least not before fall, when service leaders are expected to make a decision about the gender-based combat exclusion policy.

during breakfast and lunch. Some shared stories of their hardship and the desire to be in a better place next year.

The annual stand down is more than sharing handouts with our Veterans. In her 28 years as a VA employee, Wanda Rump has volunteered at several stand down events like Winter Haven. She's not alone. *Sue Carney, of the American Postal Workers Union*, has been a community supporter for nine consecutive years. While working the registration desk, both Rump and Carney understand that they are sometimes the first person a Veteran meets when registering for VA benefits and services.

"I just enjoy working with Veterans," Rump said. Sue Carney added Veterans are owed a lifetime of gratitude and our participation in the Winter Haven, for the past 9 years, is a collective thank you from APWU members from across the country. We are able to do what we do because of their generous donations.

VA—and community volunteers like Rump and Carney – rallied together to support the hundreds of Veterans encountering the frigid weather looking for help –not hand-outs – and a sense of hope. Supporting them was a WRAP. "WRAP means Warriors Receiving Assistance to Propel forward."

Thank You Sue Carney, for all you do for our Veterans'.

"Veterans in crisis need to know that there is hope . . ."

not doing so can affect a VA claim. VES cannot provide transportation to the exams, and does not perform exams for incarcerated, pregnant, and Gulf War (undiagnosed illness) veterans.

VA Secretary oops!

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Bob McDonald spoke with reporters and answered several questions. He admitted he said he was in the Special Forces, even though he wasn't, but he said it was an attempt to make a homeless Veteran feel more at ease. He apologized for his error.

Valentines Day 2015

On Valentine's Day, I was at the Romeo Mason's Lodge, where Postmaster Alex Stubbs had set up a cancelling station, manned by 3 Postal Clerks, in an attempt to set a new Guinness Record for hand cancelling, and mailing out, over 3,000 Valentine's Day Cards for our troops overseas, in less than 3 hours. Mary Merritt, from the Woman's Marine Corps League, set the program up, along with Postmaster Alex Stubbs. Assistance was provided by The Military Mom's, some High School and Grade School students, and a whole lot of volunteers from around Romeo, including 480-481 Area Local President Mr. Roscoe Woods Jr. The program started at Noon, with envelopes #2998, #2999, and #3000 being hand stamped at just before 2:00 PM EST. The program continued, and by 3:00PMEST, there were well over 3000 Valentines being sent out to our Troops. And a new record now exists.

60 Women Start Ranger Training

The Army made a long-expected announcement last week stating that women will be accepted into Ranger training this spring. The Army called it a "course assessment" but the reward is real for women who complete

Winter Haven Stand Down

The following is an excerpt from the Department of Veterans Affairs information and update bulletin;

The cold, rainy day couldn't keep the volunteers from the Winter Haven Stand Down. As hundreds of Veterans entered the **Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center** from the frigid weather outside, they were welcomed with sharing smiles, handshakes, words of encouragement and expressions of gratitude for their service. Veterans eagerly navigated the various stations to receive medical care, clothes, toiletries, back packs, duffel bags and information on VA benefits and services. Many took advantage of the opportunity to chat with comrades

Retiree Involvement

continued from page 2

Canada. This 53-year old pipeline conveys petroleum from western to eastern Canada. Or, that only two Michigan Congressmen; Sander Levin-D and Debbie Dingell-D, have signed on to H. Res. 54, a sense of Congress to restore delivery standards of 1st class mail, periodicals, and other mail, to service standards in effect as of July 1, 2012, after on January 5th the USPS had the audacity to lower "service standards" to accommodate delayed mail that's the result of plant consolidations. Have you asked your Member of Congress to sign on to HR

54? Legislation is where it's at!

Education Assembly: Hopefully, by the next issue of the "Messenger", I will have details for the upcoming Ed Assembly, June 4-6, the classes and hospitality events. We're considering the proven popular TSP class, a class on Medicare, a Retirement class conducted by our own Joe Gordon, and the Elder Law of Michigan. Since legislation is where it's at; a session on Legislation pertinent to postal workers and retirees. Because I firmly believe "Legislation Is Where It's At!"

Be Strong!

CORRECTION

On page 6 of the January-February issue of the *Michigan Messenger*, there was a box congratulating the Detroit District Area Local's Retiree Chapter on their 20-year anniversary. A correction is needed regarding the names of the DDAL Retiree Chapter officers. The Secretary is Carol Green and the Trustee is Yvonne Tatum.



by Linda
Turney,
National
Business Agent

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

As I write this, March 8, 2015, it is International Women's Day, and March is Women's month. What better way to celebrate than to bring attention to Myrlie Evers-Williams the widow of Medgar Evers, a Civil Rights activist who was assassinated in 1963. Myrlie Evers, decades after the brutal death of her husband, would become the NAACP's first female chair. Myrlie Evers-Williams was much more than simply her husband's widow.



Linda Turney with Brenda
Fred 480-481 Area Local

Myrlie continued in her career as an activist and journalist. One of her most important goals was to bring her husband's murderer to

justice – a goal which at first seemed impossible. De La Beckwith was indicted in the 1960s. In the 1990's, she convinced prosecutors to reopen the case. De La Beckwith went to trial and was sentenced to life in prison in 1994.

She was the first black woman appointed to the Los Angeles Board of Public Works. She continued to work with the NAACP and was instrumental in countering its ingrained patriarchy. She has published two books: *For Us, the Living*, about Evers' assassination, and *Watch Me Fly: What I Learned on the Way to Becoming the Woman I Was Meant to Be*, a memoir. She refused to remain purely a symbol of her first husband's tragedy.

Working Women, PSEs

Women PSEs who become pregnant before qualifying for FMLA do not have any contractual rights to protect them in event they are ill due to pregnancy. At the opening of contract negotiations, I spoke to President Mark Dimondstein about this issue. PSEs are not covered under Article 13 of our contract. I hope

with your help, this issue will be addressed in contract negotiations.

In 2015 for the PSEs, being pregnant while working at the Post Office could cost you your job. Our PSEs are given an impossible choice, endanger your pregnancy or lose your PSE position. Pregnant workers who ask for safe working conditions, like avoiding heavy lifting, may result in being laid off.

While the Federal Government may offer our PSEs, grievances through FMLA (1250 hours), Article 2 of our CBA or the EEOC procedure, we know through Lillie Ledbetter experiences that these claims are difficult to prove especially in the private sector and may have to go to the Supreme Court for a final decision.

The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (S3565) which was introduced in the Senate states:

"To eliminate discrimination and promote women's health and economic security by ensuring reasonable workplace accommodations for workers whose ability to perform the functions of a job are limited by pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition."

It is unlikely this legislation will pass. It is possible that we can ad-

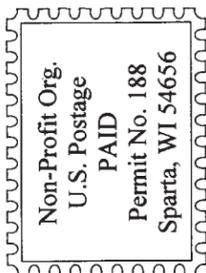


How many of these folks do you recognize?

dress the discriminatory policy of our contract by including PSEs under Article 13. Wake up women and men! Let's assist our PSE little sisters. Call for the new contract to cover Article 13 for **all** employees.

Facebook

I noticed that in the last *Michigan Messenger*, my good friend and fellow NBA, Mike O'Hearn mentioned my infamous selfie photos on Facebook. Mike too has been on many Facebook "selfies" even though he has just recently become familiar with Facebook. I have asked editor, Paul Felton, to put a few "selfies" in this edition and he has graciously accepted.



Return to APWU/MPWU
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by Lisa
Borchardt,
Area 9
Director

Area 9 Director

The Demise Of The Small Office

I work in a small post office. It used to be a three-window station about four years ago. Then it went down to a two-person operation. Now they are trying to take it down to a 1.5-window-person operation.

On top of that, the Postmaster has decided to cut the number of custodial overtime hours in the city. As a result, my office only gets a custodian about two days a week.

We are in a mall. We have trash overflowing in the lobby, the floors have salt all over them, and the rugs need to be swept. This is just what's visible to our customers. So let's not even mention our bathrooms.

I am ashamed at how my office looks to the customers!

It seems that management is pushing the demise of the small post

office. That's why they want Staples to take over the window operations. I already have customers who go to Meijer to mail some items but come back to the post office because the Meijer employees don't know how to mail those particular items. I've got nothing against the workers at Meijer. I blame management for wanting to save money, outsource our work, and not give proper training.

Instead of pushing the customer survey on the bottom of the sales receipt, maybe we should staff our offices and clean our offices so these surveys result in positive feedback.

In my offices in Area 9, most of the clerks I've talked to do the cleaning in their office. These hours should be *in addition to* your clerk duty jobs. If management isn't giving you the time to do this, let the union know and we will file the proper grievance.