

# Michigan MESSENGER



Volume 45, Number 184  
May-June, 2016

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

## In This Edition

Legislative's Director Report.....	2
Editor's Report.....	3
Area 2 Director's Report.....	3
Retiree Advisor's Report.....	4
Retiree President's Report.....	5
Human Relation's Dir. Report.....	6
Clerk Craft Director's Report.....	6
Area 4 Director's Report.....	6
Convention & Retiree Photos.....	7

## PRESIDENT



by  
Michael  
Mize

# Membership

I want to thank the delegates at the 2016 MPWU Convention for electing me as President. We had a busy few days with many National Officers as guests to come and speak. I believe the Convention went well and look forward to working with everyone the next couple years to improve the APWU, MPWU and membership.

I have noticed a problem in the APWU over the last few years that continues to grow. I have spoken about this in the past but feel compelled to discuss this again.

As Officers and Stewards we take positions to fight for the individual members and the APWU. Being a steward is a tough job to take. Your stewards work hard and give up time at home to do the best they can for the APWU and the membership. They are the backbone and muscle of this Union. They need our help!! The only satisfaction that most stewards can feel most of the time is when they can win a grievance or help a member. Let them know when they help you out how much you appreciate them. It goes a long way in the heart of many

to know how much we appreciate their sacrifice.

Part of the Area Directors (stewards) job is to talk to nonmembers about joining us in the fight for our rights. I am asking that everyone join in this task. If you are a member and work with others that are not members ask them to join. They may say no, but then when we ask they will have been asked twice or even more. If they believe the APWU is not fighting for them talk with them, have them call an Area Director or even myself. We are fighting for all of the membership and I believe we must work hard to do better. I also believe that together we can do better, but apart we will struggle. I would ask that if someone does not join we refrain from name calling or being mean in any way. We want to work together to improve the APWU.

One other place that the membership can help us to do a better job for you is to keep us informed. In a large office there are numerous people to let the stewards know when violations are taking place. In the small offices there are few employees and Man-

agement will take advantage of any opportunity in many cases to violate our rights. We do not see the violations happening as we are not there. I know it is tempting to let many things go, I am pleading with you all to keep a record and ask for a steward. The APWU has had to fight for many of the

You are the Union, together we are the Union.

### What is the Union doing for me!

It is so easy to forget the things that those before us did not have. It is also very easy to fall into a false sense of security that leaves one believing the items fought hard for were or are just normal. I want to challenge everyone to think of a few things that you have because of the Union. Some things are fought for in Congress and won, but that does not mean they were given to us by Congress. Unions have fought forever and continue to do so for improvements in conditions and rights.

Here are a couple a benefits the Unions fought for to start you thinking.

- 1) Family Medical Leave (FMLA)
  - 2) Overtime pay
  - 3) Sick days (paid too)
  - 4) Safety Programs
  - 5) 8 hour work week
- Hopefully those get the mind churning.

Have a great summer.

In Unity.

... "Management will take advantage of any opportunity in many cases to violate our rights. We do not see the violations happening as we are not there. I know it is tempting to let many things go, I am pleading with you all to keep a record and ask for a steward".

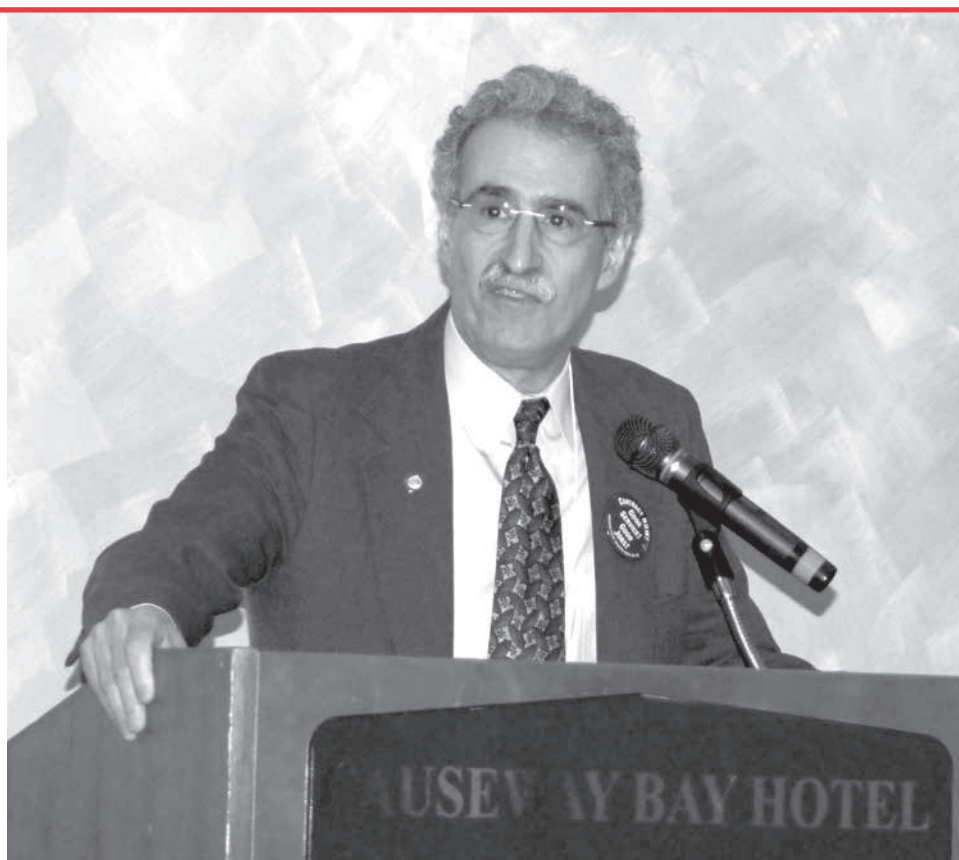
things that it is so easy to give away. This could mean your job or the help your office needs to get vacations without complaints. Stand up for every minute of work that should be yours or the APWU's.

You as members can direct the Union to the things that are most important to you. We as the leaders take the information we receive, process it and if possible move the direction you as members give. We need all of you to be involved the Union needs us to be united.

The bottom line that this all leads to!

## President Mark Dimondstein greets the Delegates at the Michigan Postal Workers Union State Convention in Lansing, MI

For more photos of other National and State Officers attending the MPWU Convention go to Page 7.



LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

# Working Hard



by  
**Roscoe Woods**

a very real and common occurrence.

We have more parents working two or more jobs and still they cannot make ends meet. This GOP led delegation here in the state and Congressional legislatures has destroyed our infrastructure, left our schools in disrepair and in some cases you cannot even drink the water that comes out of our taps.

All of this has happened in this state under GOP leadership and when it comes to our Congress the plan was and is to gridlock any progress and as a result the middle class has been suffering even as this nation enjoys a modest recovery from the great rescission.

Whether we are enamored with all the democrats currently running or serving is irrelevant to the fact that no matter how far to the left or right a democrat might be it is preferable to have them in office as opposed to a GOP rep who will most certainly come after our ability to earn a living wage and have a safe clean work place and environment.

It is my opinion that the majority of Democrats still do their best to put the interests of people a head of interests that are corporate in nature. While the Democratic Party still has a ways to go the nation and state in my opinion are far better served with a democratic majority at the state, national and executive levels.

If you care at all about the balance in your checking account, the availability of clean water, good public schools, safe roads, public safety, clean air, a living wage, your right to organize, your kids ability to take a college education and earn a decent living then you must consider in very realistic terms voting every republican in office out.

As we move forward in the 2016 election season to say this November's election is vital to our survival as a union or a middle class is an understatement. We will be deciding not only who will represent us in the House of

Representatives we will be picking our next president of these United States. The stakes are as high as ever and the danger to working people is as clear as it's ever been.

I will not pull my punches or temper my opinion with any of you, if you vote for Trump in this year's presidential election you will own the collapse that follows and I will add that if you hold elected office in the APWU you owe it to your membership to let them know you supported someone who is clearly not fit to lead the various corporations he drove to bankruptcy let alone the greatest nation on earth.

We do not need to "make" America great again, we need to make America's government responsible to its citizens not corporate lobbyists.

I will go on to say supporting any republican in a state, congressional or presidential race is to cast a ballot against everything as a union we purport to stand for. Whether you supported Sanders or Clinton through the primary it is important that you cast your vote in November for whichever Democrat is the nominee.

Of equal importance are the down ballot races for the house and state offices. The GOP here in Michigan must be removed from power so our state legislature can get about the business of repairing the damage to this state, its schools and its infrastructure.

As union leaders and as union members you owe it to your membership and your families to show leadership on these issues. Leading requires the taking of a position that in your opinion represents the best way forward to ensure our way of life and to ensure the interests of this union and the hundreds of family members associated with it are protected. You cannot vote for a republican and say that you are furthering any agenda that matters to working people.

I will close by saying those of you who live and work in MI 1st, and 7th congressional districts have a great opportunity to turn these red districts blue. The APWU is supporting both of the Democrats in these races with COPA funds and it is important that you as union leaders and members invite these Democrats to your meetings no later than your October 2016 meetings.

If you want to invite them to your general membership meetings or your picnics I can facilitate this as well. We must get out the vote and we must turn back the tide so our government supports working Americans.

In Solidarity.

I have enjoyed the last two years doing what I could to keep our legislative issues on the minds and on the agendas of Michigan's Democratic delegation. I look forward to the next two years and all the challenges that await.

I thank the membership for their confidence is nominating me to another term as the MPWU Legislative Director. I will begin my second term the same way I ended my first. With a blunt and straight forward report to you all about what I believe is important when it comes to our politics.

I noted at the top that I have been working hard with the MI Dems, I do that because the GOP here in MI or in DC does little if anything to support unions and or working people. While there may well be some moderate republicans in the house and senate their voices are drown out by the far GOP right which has used the supreme court and campaign finance laws to co-opt our election process.

I will go on the record and say that if you decide to vote for republicans in your local and national elections you need to reconsider whether you really believe in your rights to a living wage, decent benefits and a right to retire and live comfortably.

I understand some of the moral positions we all take and I believe deeply in our freedom to vote as we please, I served four years in this nations armed forces supporting and defending this right.

Setting aside the second amendment issues or the arguments for and or against a woman's right to choose this current group of republicans in our state and in our Congress want to destroy our unions, gut any and all wage protections, eliminate OSHA and pretty much drag us backwards five or six decades where dying at work was

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	Jackson	Stevensville
Central MI	486-487	Ludington	Traverse City
Cheboygan	498-499	Muskegon	Troy Local
Detroit District	Gaylord	Roger City	Western MI
Farmington	Great Lakes Area	Sault Ste Marie	
Flint	Mail Haulers	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 MPWU - Michigan Messenger, John Greathouse - Editor, PO Box 27303, Lansing, MI 48909-7303. 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.



- President..... Michael Mize**  
W: (810) 257-1534; C: (810) 444-7578  
U: (810) 239-0931; F: (810) 239-6879  
e-Mail: president@mpwu.com
- Executive Secretary..... Michael Long**  
U: (616) 977-1050; C: (616) 302-1409  
F: (616) 977-1020  
e-Mail: mdlblong@gmail.com
- Secretary-Treasurer.....Darren Joyce**  
U: (810) 239-0931; C: (810) 444-5142  
FAX: (810) 239-6879  
e-Mail: fmal11@comcast.net
- Director of Education & Research .....Lucy Morton**  
H: (248) 543-1981; C: (248) 660-3139  
e-Mail: lucyapwu56@hotmail.com
- Editor.....John Greathouse**  
U: (248) 543-3262  
e-Mail: gr8haus@sbcglobal.net
- Legislative Director..... Roscoe Woods**  
W: (248) 543-3262  
e-Mail: apwusteward@hotmail.com
- HR/Injury Compensation Director..... Keith Combs**  
U: (313) 532-9305; C: (313) 330-7030  
F: (313) 532-5433  
e-Mail: kcombs@apwudetroit.org
- 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 Director.....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: mpwuveldirector@ameritech.net
- Area 1 Director (480/481).....Steve Wood**  
U: (248) 543-3262; C: (313) 530-9182  
F: (248) 543-2750  
e-Mail: stevey\_192002@yahoo.com
- Area 2 Director (482)..... Patrick Chornoby**  
C: (313) 434-8089; U: (313) 532-9305  
F: (313) 532-5433  
e-Mail: pchornoby@apwudetroit.org
- 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).....Jim Nremsn**  
U: (989) 895-5557; C: (989) 327-5405  
H: (989) 401-6287  
e-Mail: heldman187@gmail.com
- Area 6 Director (488/489).....Lisa Jackson**  
C: (517) 256-9070; U: (517) 337-8753  
F: (517) 332-4391  
e-Mail: mamabplak@aol.com
- Area 7 Director (490/491).....VACANT**
- 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).....Jennifer Gilbert**  
C: (616) 970-4133; W: (616) 776-1542;  
U: (616) 776-1489  
e-Mail: jenilee6@aol.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. Representative.....Tamika Johnson-Smith**  
U: (313) 532-9305; F: (313) 532-5433  
e-Mail: tjohnson-smith@apwudetroit.org
- State Retiree Chapter President..... Paul Browning**  
C: (231) 275-6016  
e-Mail: oldhipster54@hotmail.com
- MPWU Auxiliary President.....Vacant**
- MPWU Historian.....Vacant**
- MPWU Advisor.....Gary VanHoogstraten**  
H: (989) 894-2656  
e-Mail: hystreet@att.net w



EDITOR



by  
**John  
Greathouse**

# This Paper Is Your Paper!

Brothers and Sisters, I am John Greathouse, your new editor for the *Michigan Messenger*. It is my hope to maintain the same high quality, informative publication that Paul Felton has produced for several years and received numerous awards for his efforts.

I am a member of the Central Michigan Area Local in Lansing and like most of the officers in your local, I hold down many jobs and duties editor: steward, legislative director, Keep 'em Open – Lansing, Grand Alliance – Michigan Director and if you ask some who know me, an all-around trouble maker... well, at least for management if they step out of line and mess with the clerks in our local or even in clerks in other locals!

**2016 MPWU Convention**

This was my first MPWU State Convention and having been to a few Area works shops it was just a larger, more formal, work shop. The big difference is that here we actually worked towards making change! At previous MI State Conventions resolutions were presented, voted on and passed by the members in attendance and a number of these when presented at the last National Convention were voted on, passed and adopted!

Case in point is our Veteran Director John Smeekens. This too requires some back story. At the 2012 National Conventions a motion was made to create a new position of Veterans Guard and reserve Information Specialist (VGRIS). It was to be a non paid position but would cover reasonable expenses to perform the duties. It did not get filled that year or at the 2014 National Convention as well.

It seems that somehow the position had fallen between the cracks at HQ and it was not till President Dimondstein was reminded of this, shortly after his arrival at the MPWU Convention. He immediately corrected this oversight and appointed John.

This is just one small change that Michigan Postal Workers Union has made that will benefit the whole country. Many of the resolutions that were presented again this year I feel will have a strong support at the National Convention and should be adopted.

**“Management Gone Wild”**

*(And no, this is not a new Spring Break Video)*

There are things going on at the Metroplex that are shocking and hard

to fathom in a work place, let alone a Post Office, but it is happening right now in the Metroplex. I just wish it was only one issue; instead Brother Roscoe has gotten himself a “Barrel full of Monkeys!”

Based on the employee survey that the 480-481 Local has conducted in addition to the Postal Pulse Survey, there is something very seriously wrong with the work environment at the Metroplex. When Brother Roscoe attempted to get this resolved with the local, district and area management, he got the perception that they have turning a blind eye on the matter. Roscoe went to APWU HQ and together are they taking this issue, as well as others to USPS Headquarters with the hopes to get it resolved before things go from bad to worse!

Brother Roscoe is attempting to work with the managers at the Metroplex on the implementation of their new “Meet and Greet Area” when employees come in to work. This area is to allow employees to have a casual conversation with the managers to discuss problems and issues. Management is raving of how successful it is in their newsletters and how well the employees like it. If you look at the photos, the employees look like cardboard cut outs and given a chance, I think they would bolt in a second! When you discuss the M&G areas with the workers in the Metroplex, it's not all “Sunshine and

Rainbows” and that is reflected in the surveys’.

“As your President I am disgusted and we will not cease pressing this agency to deal with reality - no matter what fantasy image they try to create.” Roscoe Wood, 480-481 response to the USPS Meet and Greet Area in the Metroplex.

**“As your President I am disgusted and we will not cease pressing this agency to deal with reality - no matter what fantasy image they try to create.” Roscoe Wood, 480-481 response to the USPS Meet and Greet Area in the Metroplex.**

For those of you just tuning in, conditions are getting worse but this is not unique to the Metroplex. The feeling is that management is running roughshod over employees including harassment, disrespect, threats and discipline with no merit. Generally, it makes working there a nightmare! In addition, there are problems with the methane detection system, which was out of order for almost a year and a half! Evidently the Metroplex was built on a “Brownfield” site that had been a former GM plant that was in use prior to many of the EPA rules and requirements that are used now.

Currently the EPA and OSHA are conducting investigations into the facility after the USPS-OIG had given the results of their investigation, which had been requested by APWU National. It was discovered that the detecting system was not function-

ing. When an independent company came in to test the building everything was within normal levels at that time.

If you are wondering what prompted Brother Roscoe to go to this kind of extreme, there were 5 postal worker's deaths in a 14 month time frame and he needed to know if these deaths were caused by the buildings

environment or the work environment that management has created with excessive overtime, working alone on a DBCS, and abusive managers. We all need to support the Metroplex workers during this time as they continue the fight.

**Michigan Messenger**

This paper is YOUR paper! Yes I am the editor but the only thing that entails is ensuring that any stories presented for publication do not get the MPWU or the APWU hip deep in the “odiferous” pile of you know what! With that being said, it is YOUR paper and you have a voice. Simply put, you can submit an article.

You do not need to be an elected officer at the local or state level to do write an article and I do hope that when you choose to do so it is a constructive and supportive article that will be of benefit to all of the members. Remember, it is not about you or me... It is about US!

In Solidarity!

AREA 2 DIRECTOR



by  
**Patrick  
Chornoby**

## Management At It Again

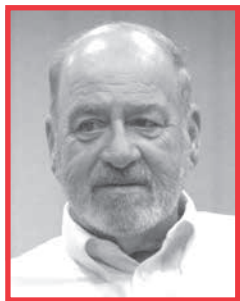
and congratulate my local Detroit president as a state officer. Keith M. Combs, Sr., who was elected as the State MPWU Human Relations/ Injury Compensation Director. Brother Sterling Bouier, was also elected from Detroit as the State MPWU Maintenance Craft Director and Tamika Johnson-Smith, from Detroit, was elected as the MPWU, Post Office Women for Equal Rights (P.O.W.E.R.) Representative.

One issue I would like to address in my first MPWU article seems to be common among all of us, and that is management's deliberate and constant neglect in adhering to our Collective Bargaining Agreement in regards to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. Management should create a healthy – stress free working environ-

ment. Instead, they seem to focus on building a hostile working environment in most of our facilities. Unfortunately, in the 482 District, management promotes the philosophy of a managing team which rules by threats and intimidation. This MUST stop. Management, in their ongoing quest in attempting to improve service, seem to run their operations with blinders on, ignoring most aspects of the job we employees perform. They treat employees poorly, yet wonder why sick leave call-ins are on the rise. They wonder why employee's call-in requesting emergencies, when under normal working conditions, management refuses to allow employees to take a day off with annual leave they requested in advance.

There has got to be some relief  
*continued on page 5*

## RETIREE ADVISOR



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

# Retiree Involvement

*"Remember, Sisters & Brothers: As YOU are now, so once were WE. As WE are now, so YOU shall be".*

**POST SCRIPT:** This is my third attempt to write this column. Still basking in the afterglow of a memorable three days in Lansing for our Conventions, I'm unable to write enough words, phrases, paragraphs to adequately express how deeply I am touched and grateful. I just viewed two DVD's; one the tribute to our late dear Sister Donna Ratkos-Mercier, the other a photo video album of the State Retiree Chapter Convention, and the emotions came rushing back again.

From the accolades, stories, and roasts by a variety of delegates, state and national officers, to the two cards covered in great written well-wishes I'm still deciphering, the two cakes with their heartwarming messages, the honor to have APWU President Dimondstein and Retirees Dept. Dir., Nancy Olumekor make a presentation during our Chapter E-Board meeting of an elegant engraved (heavy) glass plaque that has found a special place in our home, and two DVD's of video and stills produced by Mike Mercier; I admit was somewhat overwhelming. Still is. What struck me during all this was that this was a demonstration of respect for APWU retirees, and a validation of this State Retiree Chapter's value to our Union. I am truly humbled. That's not a false humility. No one knows better than this old coach that when you wear the mantle you're no better than those you have around you. I should note here that after the APWU President's remarks to the Chapter E-Board and observers, Director Olumekor stayed for the remainder of the Chapter E-Board meeting. Brother Browning and I then had the opportunity to have a frank, 'getting to know you' session with Dir. Olumekor to emphasize how and where the Dept. began, how it got to where we're at now, and vision for moving forward. Nancy was very gracious, as I hope we were as well. We conveyed that our priorities are to advance the Department to represent the best interests of APWU retired members and our Union.

On the drive down to Lansing my focus was on chairing the State Chapter Constitutional Convention and a successful "Pizza for COPA" hospitality gig. Truly. How do you accept all this showering of Brotherly & Sisterly love, quite unexpectedly at that, when

whatever I did was already rewarding as a labor of love? Being rewarded for the privilege and honor of doing something that gave me purpose in retired life. That's the best I can do to express my sincere gratitude. It's been my great honor to serve. But, here's the real truth. This son of a Flint, MI UAW Pioneer Father who had the courage to Sit-down at the Fisher Body Plant #1 against the giant GM Corp. on December 30, 1936 for 44 days, and a diminutive, progressive Mother pregnant with baby Alfred at the time, who sacrificed so we could have a better life could do no less than to honor the legacy they handed me. Ever mindful of what they would think or do, never wanting to disappoint. As far as Al; the credit (or blame) belongs to Wilfred and Alma LaBrecque. Thank You.

## CENTRAL REGION-NATIONAL RETIREE DELEGATE

If you haven't already heard; the eminently qualified Paul J. Browning has been appointed to serve the balance of my term as Central Region Delegate to the 2016 National Convention. When it became apparent that certain health issues would prevent fulfilling my duties, I submitted my resignation with the recommendation Brother Browning be appointed to the position. Sister Judy Beard facilitated the recommendation, and with the approval of Dir. Olumekor and the N.E.B., President Dimondstein appointed Paul effective June 1st. Central Region Retirees Dept. members, Local and State Chapters will continue to have a voice and vote in Convention. Four critical retiree Resolutions from Michigan are submitted to national. I'd have liked to have had one more crack at debating a Resolution I authored, and will miss being with so many Brothers and Sisters from across the APWU that I had the privilege of interacting with over the years.

But most of all, my dear CA Brother, Byron Denton, Western Region Retiree Representative (a.k.a. delegate, Liz) with whom I've had the privilege of collaborating with since 1996 when we were the first elected "Original Five" National Retiree Delegates. We were a team. I wrote 'em, Byron debated 'em. Two of the most significant being; the right to elect our own Director, and the right to vote for national officers.

**MPWU CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.** For chairing his first

convention, MPWU President Mike Mize performed as if he had been doing this all his life. Well done! The Constitution Committee, chaired by Sister Amy Pulhaski, is to be commended for bringing in the makers of retiree Resolutions, including expert counsel of national officers; John Marcotte and Judy Beard, before determining the Committee's recommendations. I view it as another unspoken matter of respect. The Convention delegates also unanimously adopted a Resolution I'm proud to have authored that would petition the Governor, Attorney General, and members of the Michigan Legislature to exercise state authority to stop the flow of crude in the 63-year old Enbridge Line 5 from Superior, WI across the U.P. that crosses under the environmentally sensitive Straits of Mackinac through eastern MI to Sarnia, Ont., Canada. This, the same company whose Line 6B ruptured more than a million gallons of dirty crude in the Kalamazoo

tion to adopt a Resolution establishing a "Retiree Advisor" position of the immediate past chapter president to administratively transition the records, books and files, to assist the President and provide counsel upon the president's request. It was adopted as the Committee modified. The Nominations Committee chaired by Rick Brown (486-487) reported with only one contested office; President. Elected unopposed we Welcome Sister Jane Duggan (DDAL) as Chapter Secretary-Treasurer. Brother Lynn Walker (TCAL) moved to Vice-President, and Trustees; Patty Miller (FMAL), Al Fouche, and John Canfield (WMAL) all unopposed and elected by acclamation. The Election Committee chaired by Larry Miller (480-481) conducted a secret ballot election for State Chapter president between Brothers Paul Browning (TCAL) and George Hendricks (WMAL). Browning was elected 2nd president of the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. That's our 2016-2018

*"Being rewarded for the privilege and honor of doing something that gave me purpose in retired life. That's the best I can do to express my sincere gratitude. It's been my great honor to serve."*

watershed resulting in 4 years clean-up costing \$1.2M. "Governor; Don't "Flint" the Straits of Mackinac!"

## "PIZZA FOR COPA"

It couldn't have gone better! Plenty of good food. Host Local President Lisa Jackson and the CMAL hospitality committee got it all set up and watched over the food line and COPA jug the entire evening. The room was spacious, perfect for our event. Delegate and guest generosity netted \$760 for COPA, our best effort to date. Without the 'Mothership' MPWU the State Chapter can neither function nor exist. We piggyback our Constitutional Conventions and Education Assemblies while the MPWU lead officers fulfill all our accommodations. MPWU Pres. Mike Mize, Exec.-Sec. Mike Long (big time), Sec.-Treas. Darren Joyce, and Education & Research Dir. Lucy Morton make us look good! So do the editors of the "Messenger", my best means for communicating with you, the active and retired membership.

**STATE CHAPTER CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MPWU STATE CHAPTER CONVENTION:** From Calling to Order, the agenda went like clockwork. Committees were in place. The Constitution Committee chaired by Al Fouche (DDAL) reported their recommenda-

tion to adopt a Resolution establishing a "Retiree Advisor" position of the immediate past chapter president to administratively transition the records, books and files, to assist the President and provide counsel upon the president's request. It was adopted as the Committee modified. The Nominations Committee chaired by Rick Brown (486-487) reported with only one contested office; President. Elected unopposed we Welcome Sister Jane Duggan (DDAL) as Chapter Secretary-Treasurer. Brother Lynn Walker (TCAL) moved to Vice-President, and Trustees; Patty Miller (FMAL), Al Fouche, and John Canfield (WMAL) all unopposed and elected by acclamation. The Election Committee chaired by Larry Miller (480-481) conducted a secret ballot election for State Chapter president between Brothers Paul Browning (TCAL) and George Hendricks (WMAL). Browning was elected 2nd president of the MPWU State Retiree Chapter. That's our 2016-2018 "in good hands" State Chapter E-Board. We couldn't do much better than to have former outstanding Local presidents chairing the committees. The Audit Committee and Secretary-Treasurer's reports show the Chapter in sound financial condition. It was noted that in the future the Chapter must necessarily be more frugal when considering major expenditures, especially to national functions. With business concluded and before adjournment; 480-481 delegate, Brother Mike Mercier lightened the atmosphere with his antics to take a series of group photos which he has made into an awesome DVD. It was a special treat to reconnect with Mike again. It was at once a joyful reunion with valued long-time Sisters & Brothers, and a successful Convention meeting our Constitutional obligations.

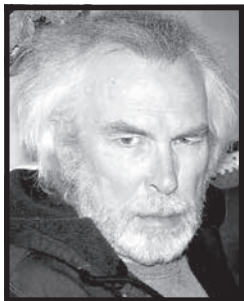
Unlike national APWU; the MPWU installation of officers included the elected State Retiree Chapter officers as the last order of business on Saturday. Again, there was Mike with his camera, along with others. One in particular was with favorite son; Leo Persails and I bracketing the Conventions youngest delegates which helped hatch my proposed "Back to the Future" project.

## MENTORING

I'm not settled on the column title just yet. A work in progress. I think I can continue to be of service mentoring APWU under-35 members on the fundamentals of leadership with a

*continued on page 5*

RETIREE PRESIDENT



by Paul Browning

# Retiree Force

My name is Paul Browning and I am the new President of the Retiree Chapter of the Michigan Postal Workers Union. I follow in the footsteps of Mr. Union himself, Al LaBrecque. So, as the old Blues song goes, "Hand me down my walking cane". It's time for all APWU, all Union, and all retirees to standup, be counted, and get on the move. And I'm not talking about going on a daily one mile walk. Any poll of voters shows that the biggest turnout comes from over the 55 age group people. We have worked for 40 years or longer to reach what was promised to us all those years—a secure pension, social security, healthcare benefits, etc. Now, we have forces in action which want to take those away from us. But we are a force also. When we join with our fellow APWU members still working, we can rise up and be a voice not just for retirees but for and with all APWU members. We must be a single voice for all our hard fought for and hard won benefits. A single loud and strident voice for a decent standard of living for our children, our grandchildren, and all of our "Great Society".

"A single loud and strident voice for a decent standard of living for our children, our grandchildren, and all of our "Great Society".

I don't know of anyone who has worked longer and harder for the good of Unions and working class people than Al LaBrecque. For 57 years-longer than many of us have been alive—Al stirred the pot, pushed the limits, kept the fire burning and even held it to the feet of those in power who would grow rich and fat off the labor and struggles of others. That's us, the others. The 99%. It's a cliché but clichés exist for a reason. They are truths. Now, Time—the Great Equalizer—has finally slowed Al down. What an example he has set with his will and dedication for the public good of all. I am incredibly humbled to have Al pass the torch to an old bluesman like myself. Yet Al is not all the way out of the picture. He and I have written several resolutions concerning APWU retirees for the APWU National Constitution which will be presented and voted on by approximately 2,000 delegates in attendance at the biennial APWU National Convention this Summer in Orlando, Florida. (Think it will be hot?) And I am also quite sure we will continue to hear the old warrior's words on occasion.

The subject resolutions were voted on and passed by our still working

and full dues paying Union brothers and sisters at the recent Michigan Postal Workers Union State Convention. We are mightily grateful for their trust and support in recognizing that we are all in the struggle together regardless of our status or the dollar amount of Union dues money paid.

Here in Michigan, we realize the "All for One and One for All" old saying and the strength that goes with it. Our State Retiree resolutions have to do with Retiree Chapter voting presence on the National Convention floor (currently none), National APWU expenses for our 5 regionally elected Retiree Delegates/Representatives at the off year National Retiree Conference, and a seat for the APWU Retiree Director on the Board of Directors of the APWU Health Plan which has many thousands of APWU retiree enrollees. As appointed by

National APWU President Mark Diamondstein, I will be Al's replacement for the remainder of his term as the Central Region Retiree Delegate—one of 5 retiree delegates (out of roughly 2,000 total delegates) empowered to

various crafts what conditions they should contractually negotiate for or what or how their representation should function.

Here in Michigan, we realize the "All for One and One for All" old saying and the strength that goes with it".

"Here in Michigan, we realize the "All for One and One for All" old saying and the strength that goes with it".

speaking for our almost 40,000 retiree members. I pledge to our members to work hard and speak forcefully for our resolutions. To those who would object to a more than minuscule retiree voice on the Convention floor with the arguments of let them pay full dues or that retirees want to run the Union, I say that our almost 40,000 retiree members with even an average work career of 25 years paid over ONE MILLION YEARS OF FULL DUES! Where would the APWU be without those monies? And we have no wish to tell our members in the

We wish only a more than token vote on the almost 70 resolutions like those contained in the 2014 National Convention book which had nothing to do with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Those resolutions included everything from Legislative to Constitutional to Social/Political issues. Certainly APWU Retirees should be able to have a say on them. That is our simple goal as retirees at a National Convention.

In Unity, Brotherhood, and Equality.

## Management At It Again

continued from page 3

for postal employees if management truly wants to improve working conditions and improve their customer service. Gaining employee trust is a good place to start. It is most disturbing for our senior employees who

once worked for a management team who had some compassion towards the needs of its workers. I only hope that the USPS changes their direction. Management needs to work towards improving the morale among them and their workers. If they don't,

the postal service will continue to 'nose-dive' in a downward spiral until the post office, as we know it today, will no longer exist, and we don't want that.

Best wishes my friends.

## Retiree Involvement

continued from page 4

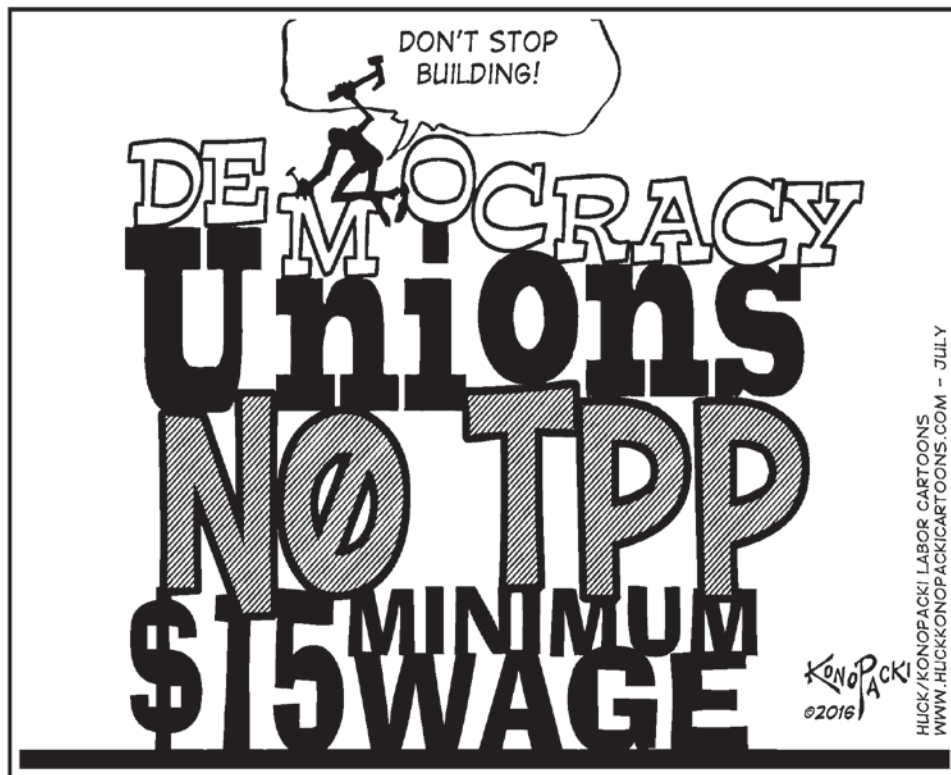
first-hand understanding of where we came from, the struggle and how we get where they are today, and to better understand the legacy they're now charged to uphold as Labor Leaders. Likewise, this column to mentor APWU members approaching retirement, and our newest retired members on what to expect in simplest of terms. Have you ever told your kids or someone looking to you for direction; "You can learn from my mistakes"? There are issues and some surprises that my experiences may be enlightening. Retired members are reminded; Just because you're retired, you're NEVER out of the arena!

To all who participated in the MPWU and State Chapter Constitutional Conventions....I feel your love and keep it close to my heart. When Pres. Mize finally gave me the opportunity to address the delegates; reduced to a blubbing old man, what I planned to say was in vain to express my gratitude. I had promised

myself not to allow emotions to rule, to no avail... I've been able to rectify that herein. Again, I close with the last words to my teams before they

took to the field; "Good Luck, God Bless You, I Love You Guys!"

Solidarity Forever!



Konopacki Labor Cartoons www.huckonopackcartoons.com - JULY ©2016

HUMAN RELATIONS DIRECTOR



by Keith Combs

# Addressing CA Forms

Greeting Brothers and Sisters of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, I am extremely happy to be your new State Human Relations Director.

It is my intention to address training ASAP that will allow the State to become more familiar with the basics of OWCP related issues. We must become very familiar with the CA forms so that we can correctly assist our members.

Let's begin with the CA-1 Form.

This form is a Notice of TRAUMATIC INJURY. This form is utilized for a Traumatic Injury/accident in a claim when an Employee/Member has suffered a one day injury or accident. This form is also used when asking for Continuation of Pay.

It is important to remember that there is a 3 Day Waiting Period for an injury/accident when filing a CA-1 for which any type of LEAVE can be used as well as the claimant NON SCHEDULED DAY OFF.

The CA-2 form is a Notice of OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE. This is used when an illness and/or injury have occurred in excess of one day or it

pans over a period of time resulting in more than one day. The Claimant should provide the Department of Labor a Physicians narrative along with this form. Physicians have recently been requesting to be paid when patients are asking for more and more documentation from the Physician, so let try and get it right the first time around.

The CA-2a form is a Notice of RECURRENCE. This form is used when a claimant has an approved claim and hasn't actually returned to full duties, and/or the approved claim gets worse. When a claimant on limited duty in regards to their approved case is told that there is NO WORK AVAIL-

ABLE to the individual. The Claimant should always make sure that he/she has a signed PS Form 3971 to document any time off and/or periods of LEAVE. Management should either provide the employee with a signed PS Form 3971 or a letter stating why the employee is being given a No Work Available status and the date it started. The claimant should provide the Department of Labor a letter from their Physician, stating their diagnosis, and showing some casual relationship with the approved claim.

We will in the future discuss many more CA forms. I wish you all well and until next time remember that Actions Triumphs Words.

CLERK CRAFT DIRECTOR



by Thomas Lothamer

# Inside The Mind Of A Manager

All of the information contained in this article are opinion, any relationship to any one manager are coincidental and if it makes you feel as if it is you, then maybe you should stop acting like an a\*\* and treat people with dignity and respect.

The beginning is a combination of things, maybe it is that they think they can do a better job than they have observed, maybe they want to learn all they can learn and take this job to another level, maybe they are sick of the games that go on constantly as a craft employee, maybe they are lazy and they think that by telling others what to do they can take the easier path to middle management. Some are taking a short cut to 40 hours, selling themselves like prostitute and selling their Union short by falsifying time keeping, working off the clock, abusing anyone that they have a personal beef with as they cash their check with the conscious of a criminal.

If they survive the initiation of a 204b and become an EAS manager then they get their own office, maybe... maybe they are a supervisor and still have to answer to a Postmaster and they have to take all of the necessary training that goes with the position like How to be a Liar 101. How to create hostile environments with just a little gossip. How to deny grievances (maybe they want to sustain a grievance but their boss is telling them to deny, deny, deny). How to play favorites and deny anyone else a fair schedule, work, break, environment...

Then maybe they do become a Postmaster somewhere in the field where there is no direct supervision. Now they are a demi-god, not all the powers of a real god but super powers that shows they are above the rest of us. They get to tell us when to clock in and clock

out, approve our leave, and if they are nice people then they try to get along. But this does not mean they will follow the contract, they have a budget for peat's sake. So they get you to perform multiple duties and ask you to be one, two, or even three people at once. Threaten you not to go into V time because they will end up on some list and receive discipline from the P.O.O.M. and we all know shit rolls down hill and they will make sure you are in the path! They tell you not to call the Union if they give you the time off but then have a carrier do your work or

if they do more than they are supposed to because then you won't get any more time off. (False)!!! They label you a trouble maker if you call the Union about equalizing hours, paying for mileage, or questioning them in any way. After all don't you know they are a supreme be-

ing worthy of your groveling and brown nosing? They are a demi-god.

Now for all you mangers reading this, you're not all bad but there are enough bad ones out there that makes me bring this to everyone's attention. This is no news flash for a steward but maybe a new employee reads this or maybe someone is out there frustrated with their current situation at work. If you are contemplating this move then

let me give some advice. DON'T DO IT!!! Don't sell your soul, don't remove your integrity, and don't manage even for a minute. We need integrity, intelligence and grit right here in the Union. Becoming active is the best way to make a change. We are looking

for some good Stewards out there in the Associate Offices and the changes we make are Collectively Bargained, not stolen off of the backs of our co-workers. Once you start it is hard to look back at what you once were, management at times is like the stranger in the windowless van offering you a piece of candy. Don't let them steal your innocence. Hopefully this article resonates with some of you and hopefully it made some of you grin and finally hopefully it revealed some of the workings that go on inside the mind of a manager.

**"We need integrity, intelligence and grit right here in the Union. Becoming active is the best way to make a change."**

AREA 4 DIRECTOR

# Help The New Guy

by Angelynn Gebstadt

Despite my begging and pleading none of you in my area ran against me, so once again you are stuck with me for another term as director. ☺

We continue to get conversions, promotions and new hire... Help the new guy next to you. Maybe they don't know they can put in for mileage when the postmaster has them deliver Express in their own vehicle. Maybe they didn't know when the

postmaster asked them to report to a different AO but drive on their lunch they actually get paid for that time. Maybe our brand-new nifties didn't know they get paid for 8 hours of holiday pay and not just the total hours they normally would have worked. If they are in an office where the clerk has to do the cleaning because there is no custodian, it's an addition to their posted bid time.

You and I have been playing this

game for a while now, I have tried to educate you on the rules-- so help a new guy out. And as always if you have a problem or question give me a call I'm well aware you all have my number.

**DEADLINE**  
for articles for the next issue  
of the Michigan Messenger  
is July 30, 2016

# Michigan Postal Workers Union State Convention

continued from page 1

The 2016 MPWU State Convention had the honor of welcoming our APWU National President Mark Dimondstein along with almost all of the National Executive Board. President Dimondstein speech covered how our contract negotiations had progressed up to and through arbitration.

APWU National Vice President Debby Szeredy gave a very spirited presentation covering gamut of subjects from the CBA to Plant Closings. Anytime we can get national officers out of DC and into the

field to meet and talk with the members is a great opportunity for us. "Momma" Liz Powell, our APWU National Secretary-Treasurer gave a brief presentation informing us that the APWU is operating on a sound, financial footing.

Other National Officer that joined us, Industrial Relations Director - Tony McKinnon Sr., Clerk Craft Director - Clint Burelson, Asst. Clerk Craft Director - Lynn Pallas-Barber, Motor Vehicle Craft Director - Michael Foster, Health Plan Director - John Marcotte, Legislative & Political Director - Judy Beard,

Retiree Director - Nancy Olumekor, Asst. Maintenance Craft Director - Terry Martinez, Voluntary Benefits Plan - Maura McGrath, Accident Benefit Association ABA - Ed Brennan.

Our Central Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone along with Clerk Craft NBA Linda Turney, Clerk Craft NBA James Stevenson and Maintenance Craft NBA Curtis Walker spoke on the floor for a brief moment but held several one on one conversation throughout the whole convention with anyone who had a question or issue that needed to be addressed.



APWU National Vice President Debby Szeredy



APWU National Secretary - Treasurer Liz Powell



APWU Nat. Ind. Relations Director Tony McKinnon Sr.



APWU Nat. Clerk Craft Director Clint Burelson



APWU Nat. Motor Vehicle Craft Director Michael Foster



APWU Nat. Health Plan Director John Marcotte



APWU Nat. Legislative & Political Dir. Judy Beard



Central Region Coord. Sharyn Stone



NBA Linda Turney Clerk Craft

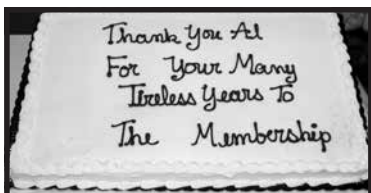


APWU Nat. Retiree Director Nancy Olumekor

## Retirees' Convention



Leo Persails - former MPWU President, and NBA



Congratulations Al LaBrecque on your retirement.



Al LaBrecque



MPWU Retirees Board



Michigan Retirees Convention

— photos by Michael Mercier

## VETERANS DIRECTOR ...

### Veterans' News

by John P. Smeekens



awaiting destruction. Of 155 claims-related documents, 69 were found to have been incorrectly placed in shred bins at six of the ten regional offices: Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, New Orleans, Philadelphia and Reno. No discrepancies were found at Baltimore, Oakland, San Juan and St. Petersburg, Fla.

#### SHOCKED???

Department of Veterans Affairs investigators recently conducted spot checks at 10 Veterans' benefits offices in and around the country and found some disturbing results; The VA has been shredding documents related to veterans' claims; some potentially affecting their benefits. The VA Office of Inspector General conducted the surprise audit at 10 different regional offices in July 20 of 2015. An investigation into inappropriate shredding in Los Angeles found that staff there was destroying veterans' mail related to claims, according to an OIG report recently released. Investigators arrived unannounced at regional offices and went through over 437,000 documents that were

#### SCHEDULING PROBLEMS???

Recently, internal investigations found widespread falsifying of patient wait times at over 38 different VA medical facilities in 19 states and Puerto Rico. The VA's inspector general released two years of reports totaling 70 investigations, finding that VA supervisors ordered employees to cook the books on wait times, on a regular basis, despite a promised crackdown on mis-

continued on page 8

MAINTENANCE CRAFT DIRECTOR



by Sterling Bouier

Focusing On Maintenance

representatives put on an excellent case on our behalf and I look forward to the arbitrator's decision.

In the meantime, maintenance craft needs to focus as much as possible on ensuring that our staffing packages are accurate and sufficient to maintain all maintenance responsibilities in each particular facility.

That includes custodial duties, MPE duties, BEM duties, and MSC duties as well. Please challenge any/all discrepancies and file the necessary grievances if needed. We must work together to protect our jobs and keep maintenance work in maintenance! We cannot allow the postal service to continue to contract out our work and eliminate our jobs!!!!

As always feel free to contact me if there are any questions or if you are in need of my services. I am here to serve. I can be contacted at 313 965-1398 (maintenance office @GWY Detroit) or by email at sbouier@apwudetroit.org. Thank you all for allowing me to serve.

In Union Solidarity.

Hello MPWU Brothers and Sisters,

First, I would like to thank you for allowing me to continue to serve as the Michigan Postal Workers Union Maintenance Craft Director for my second consecutive term. I ran unopposed during the election process, so either I'm doing an excellent job or no one wants the position. I believe it's a little of each, but I will welcome the challenge and look forward to putting forth my best effort to assist in creating a better future as postal workers for us all. I ask for any/all input or ideas for ways that I may better serve the needs of our members.

We are currently patiently awaiting the end results of our National APWU contract negotiations. I expect several changes that will directly affect the maintenance craft. I am confident that any/all changes will be beneficial to us all as a craft. In my opinion our

Veterans' News

continued from page 7 management and data manipulation by Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald. In some cases, investigators found that VA facilities had been falsifying records for almost 10 years.

MVAA AWARD

MVAA recently received national accolades for its efforts to connect veterans with the benefits they've earned - an accomplishment the agency is celebrating on its third anniversary.

In February, MVAA received two 2016 Abraham Lincoln Pillars of

Excellence Awards from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Five states were honored with seven awards.

MVAA was one of two state departments to receive multiple recognition for its Michigan Veterans Community Action Team program - a community-based, locally led program that has brought 1,187 organizations together to better serve state veterans - and its Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center - a one-stop program connecting veterans to federal benefits, state programs and local services through a toll-free phone number, 800-MICH-VET (800-642-4838).

H.B. 5169

Based on the email that went around on HB 5169 recently, I wanted to update you on what we know;

A- It would eliminate the Property Tax exemption for those 100% disabled veterans rated by the VA and replace it with a \$1200 Homestead Tax Credit.

B- There was a hearing in the Tax Policy committee on Feb 17, 2016. Rep Poleski gave testimony to introduce the bill. There were no VSO's present because none were aware of the introduction of this bill. It was not voted out of committee.

C- The bill is supported by the MI Counties Association, Townships, Assessors, and MI Municipal League.

D- Naturally it's about the money. \$16,000,000, from ALL 83 counties.

What should veterans do, especially those who receive this exemption?

- #1 Write your representative; #2 write each of the sponsors of the bill; #3 write or talk to your city council members about how this bill helps you stay in your home and contributes to the community; #4 write an editorial for your local paper.

And don't forget Cities and Counties will give tax exemptions

to big box stores, large companies, and special projects to bid for their business to come to their city or township which costs them tax revenue. They don't seem to mind that. Has your local area given a tax exemption away to a big company in the past few years?

Here are the representative's names and districts; District 64, Poleski; District 65, Roberts; District 78, Pagel; District 100, Bumstead; District 24, Forlini. These names were taken directly from the Bill.

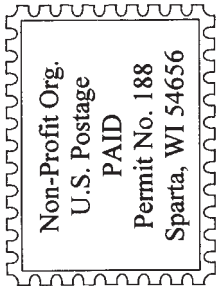
BURN PITS

The Burn Pit Registry is a nice way for Veterans to get their foot in the door at the VA and to explore the services, benefits and resources available to them through VA health care.

Learn more at: http://www.va.gov/HEALTH/NewsFeatures/2016/March/Were-you-exposed-to-burn-pits-while-deployed.asp#sthash.8zAnET0I.dpuf

THANK YOU

I would like to THANK all of you that were in attendance at the recent MPWU Constitutional Convention held in Lansing. Thanks for your support, as I was nominated and awarded, the position of Veterans Director. If I can ever be of assistance to a Veteran, a Veterans' Spouse, or a Veterans' Family, DO NOT HESITATE to contact me. E-mail me, Call me, or mail me your concerns and I will get you either an answer, or get you to the people who can get you an answer. THANK YOU!!!



Return to APWU/MPWU c/o John Greathouse, Editor P.O. Box 27303 Lansing, MI 48909-7303 Address Service Requested

Separately we are weak, United we are strong!