

Michigan MESSENGER

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PRESIDENT



by
Michael
Mize

Where Are We Now?

I believe these were ill advised decisions but again I do support every individual person's right in this great Nation to choose. My only hope at this point is that the things you may have voted for come true and the things that scare me do not.

We need to get together on the issues that we can all agree on and fight for those issues.

"Brothers and Sisters, now is the time we need to unite and work together for each other's protection."

I am certain I will be asked what my concerns are and in general it is the continued success of the USPS and all the employees that strive every day to achieve that excess. The continuing success of the USA and betterment of all who reside here. I am concerned about Unions being lost to the past and all of us working for less. I am concerned about right to work laws that just mean a lower wage for many employees. I am concerned about the very way of life that we as postal employees have worked so hard to get. I am concerned that the change

so many people voted for will be their demise and not the change they expected.

I'm sure it will be said that Trump should not concern me in this way. Maybe he shouldn't, but he does. I stated that he was not in my opinion Presidential. My opinion has not changed, but his position has. I sincerely hope that I am

wrong and that he turns out to be great for this Nation. Unfortunately, that does not alleviate the concerns that myself and many others have. The biggest concern I have is that not only is Trump our President but Republicans have all but total control of the government. There is little for checks and balances in the administration for the next two years. That is scary to me.

So, what do we do? We need to get together on the issues that we can all agree on and fight for those issues. I believe most of us can unite behind

the simple survival of the USPS and our positions as we know them. I believe we can unite in the belief that the American people deserve the service that we were supplying 6 or 7 years ago, and not the slowdown in mail service today.

We need to stand with those that are being treated unfairly. We may not even agree with the lifestyle they live or who they are. That does not matter, why? It matters because if we stand together with our neighbor in their fight, then they will stand with us in our fight. I do not expect that one should stand for something they do not believe in, just stand up for each other's rights that we are entitled to. United, we are strong!!!

Brothers and Sisters, now is the time we need to unite and work together for each other's protection. We need this more now than any other time since I have been involved in the APWU or the USPS.

Bottom line, we are here to fight for your rights and with all your help we will continue to do just that.

In Unity.

The election is over for the United States of America. Now the question will be, are we united? With social media and news coverage like no one has ever seen before this election was brutal. I personally have seen more dirty laundry, history and bashing in this election than I needed to see for the rest of my life.

I am not overly pleased with the election results as the people in power have not shown a desire to keep the PUBLIC postal service a thriving operation and public. The Republican party has been at the front of the battle that has caused great harm to the United States Postal Service and every individual that works for the USPS. That does not change what the results are and like them or not I must respect the decision of the people as I believe in our system.

I understand that many of the people we work with and that are members reading this publication voted their mind and supported the Republican party in many races on their ballot. In my heart,

President Obama's Analysis Of How The Media Failed America Should Be Read By Everyone

The new media ecosystem "means everything is true and nothing is true."

THE DAILY BANTER
AUTHOR: BEN COHEN

PUBLISH DATE: NOV 18, 2016

In a truly extraordinary article by The New Yorker editor David Remnick, the veteran journalist recounts the time he spent with President Obama in the lead up to election night and in the days after.

Remnick, who authored the 2010 biography *The Bridge - The Life and Rise of Barack Obama*, got first hand insight into how the President responded to the catastrophic loss, and his incisive questions provide a unique insight into how Obama thinks about the tumultuous political landscape in America.

While the essay grapples with a wide variety of issues, it is Obama's insight into the current media culture that stands out. The President has run campaigns in two different media eras — the standard television and newspaper based era where there was a generally agreed upon reality, and the new social

media paradigm where communities wall themselves off from opposing views and live in their own bubbles of wildly differing realities. This exchange between Remnick and Obama is extremely telling:

The new media ecosystem "means everything is true and nothing is true," Obama told me later. "An explanation of climate change from a Nobel Prize-winning physicist looks exactly the same on your Facebook page as the denial of climate change by somebody on the Koch brothers' payroll. And the capacity to disseminate misinformation, wild conspiracy theories, to paint the opposition in wildly negative light without any rebuttal—that has accelerated in ways that much more sharply polarize the electorate and make it very difficult to have a common conversation."

That marked a decisive change from previous political eras, he maintained. "Ideally, in a democracy, everybody would agree that climate change is the consequence of man-made behavior, because that's what ninety-nine per cent of scientists tell us," he said. "And then we would have a debate about how to fix it. That's how, in the seventies, eighties, and nineties,

you had Republicans supporting the Clean Air Act and you had a market-based fix for acid rain rather than a command-and-control approach. So you'd argue about means, but there was a baseline of facts that we could all work off of. And now we just don't have that."

The proliferation of fake news stories on Facebook and Twitter no doubt played a huge role in the election of Donald Trump. While Leftist sites are no doubt guilty of disseminating poorly sourced stories that no serious outlet would publish (think US Uncut for example), radical Rightwing sites are so far removed from consensus reality that they might as well be discussing an alternate universe. Sites like InfoWars and Breitbart.com defy every rule of ethical journalism, but are never held to account because in the new media era, they can thrive off of the communities they create. Facebook and Google are thankfully taking steps to defund these sites and marginalize them, but the damage has already been done, and we now face four years under the rule of a uniquely unqualified and dangerous sociopath.

E·D·I·T·O·R

These Are The Best Of Times, These Are The Worst Of Times . . .



by
John
Greathouse

A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is a novel by Charles Dickens, set in London and Paris before and during the French Revolution... Jump forward 157 years and welcome to the 2016 United States Presidential Election or depending on which point of view you checked in on, it was the best of times or the worst!

With the ups and downs of this election and all of the predictions of who was winning or losing only to find out that almost all of the predictions were wrong, very, very wrong!

I know many of you were happy with the outcome and other upset... some were quite upset. But we have been through thick and thin with this county and our founding fathers installed many checks and balances to prevent one branch from running ruff-shod over the country.

Here is hoping that history does not repeat itself!

But that is only as good as the other 2 branch's keep the 3rd in check and with a GOP controlled House and Senate it could be very interesting. If you look back in history, the last time this happened was 1928. If you look up the events that followed in 1929, the stock market crashed and was quickly followed by the Great Depression! Here is hoping that history does not repeat itself!

I am hoping you did your civic duty and voted in this election regardless of how you voted. I would have hoped you would have voted to support you're your union job but in the end, you had to vote on how you feel and believe.

Now that the voting is over, what can you do?

Fight for your job is what you can do! The elections are history and we need to focus on the Lame Duck session of Congress to keep them from putting

the screws to us again (remember the PAEA)!

First and foremost, call your Congressman and tell them to Oppose H.R. 5714.

This is the "Medicare integration" that would establish a postal-only health plan in the Federal Employee Health

them to support only people who will advocate for a strong public Postal Service should be nominated to the USPS Board of Governors and the Postal Regulatory Commission. Recent nominees have included proponents of postal privatization and a lobbyist for the payday lending industry, which opposes postal banking.

"Keep pushing for language in the bill that retains door delivery as opposed to curbside cluster boxes."

We must keep the "service" in the Postal Service by restoring overnight delivery of first class mail and periodicals within the same metropolitan area; maintain-

ing six-day and door-to-door delivery; speeding up mail delivery overall; restoring full hours of retail operations in rural communities, and halting the closure of processing facilities.

We seek to expand services to enable the USPS to better fulfill its mission. Basic financial services, such as paycheck cashing, could help millions of the working poor who are preyed upon by payday lenders and check-cashers.

Consider Voting by Mail

We also seek an expansion of voting by mail to increase voter participation and address – at least in part – the scourge of voter suppression. I know of a couple of County Clerks in the Mid-Michigan area who are interested in looking at it as a cost saving measure. The voters as well as the Postal Service will be the winners if it goes through. Talk with your city or county clerks and ask them if they have considered going to Voting by Mail? There is a good deal of information available from; <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>

I did get part of my article from the APWU national website and pass the information on to you, but I will give them the credit for it as well, so thanks APWU!

In Solidarity.



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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	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	

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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 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.

HUMAN RELATIONS DIRECTOR



by
Keith
Combs

Disability Retirement FERS

It is important that we discuss Disability Retirement to make sure we know how to go about getting this approval once our illness and/or injury has made it necessary to look at Disability Retirement.

Eligibility:

1. 18 months Federal civilian service which is creditable under FERS.
2. Become disabled, while employed, from disease or injury for useful and efficient service in current position.
3. Disability must last more than year.
4. Employer must verify they are unable to accommodate your disabling medical condition.
5. Must apply before separation or within one year thereafter.
6. You must apply for Social Security disability benefits when you apply for FERS disability. If you withdraw your Social Security disability application, OPM will dismiss the FERS disability retirement application.

Required Criteria:

OPM considers the documentary evidence you, your physician, and your agency provide. Your claim can be allowed only if the evidence established that you meet all of the following criteria:

1. A medical condition, which is defined as health impairment
 - Resulting from a disease or injury, including a psychiatric Disease.
2. Disability must last more than one year.
3. Become disabled while serving under FERS.
4. A deficiency in service with respect to performance, conduct or Attendance, or in the absence of service deficiency, show that your Medical condition is incompatible with either useful service or Retention in the position.
5. Your medical condition has caused a service deficiency.
6. Your Employer is unable to reasonably accommodate your medical condition.
7. The absence of another available position, within the employing Agency and commuting area at the same grade or pay level and tenure for with you are qualified for reassignment.

Required Form:

1. SF 3107 Application for Immediate Retirement with associated Forms.
2. SF 3112 Application for Disability Retirement including 5 parts, Schedules A, B, C, D and E.

Once OPM has received your application, you will receive an acknowledgement letter with information and a claim number (beginning with letters CSA). Receipt on a CSA number means that your application has been received and will be reviewed to determine your eligibility for disability retirement. OPM will review the application and contact your or the employer, if necessary, before a final opinion is rendered. If disallowed, you will also be given information about requesting reconsideration.

Annuity Computation:

Disability benefits under FERS are computed in different ways depending on the retiree's age and amount of service retirement. In addition, FERS disability retirement benefits are recomputed after the first 12 months and again at age 62, if the annuitant is under age 62 at the time of disability retirement.

1. If at disability retirement you are already 62, or you meet the age and service requirements for immediate retirement, you will receive your earned annuity based on the general FERS formula:

1% of you high 3 average salaries multiplied by your years and months of service.

However, if you are at least 62 years old at retirement and have completed at least 20 years of service your annuity will be computed with a 1.1% factor.

2. If at disability retirement you are under age 62 and are not eligible for Voluntary retirement, you will receive the following benefit:

a) For the first 12 months 60% of your high 3 average salary minus 100% of your Social Security disability benefits for any month in which you are entitled to SS benefits.

b) After the first 12 months 40% of your high 3 minus 60% of your Social Security Disability benefits for any month in which you are Entitled to SS benefits

It is important to realize the amount of your OPM annuity will be reduced by a percentage of your Social Security benefits if approved. Do not overlook this and find later that you owe a large amount to OPM.

2. When you reach age 62, your annuity will be recomputed using an amount that represents the annuity you would have received if you had continued working until the day before your 62nd birthday. The total years used in the computation will be increased by the amount of the time you have received a disability annuity.

Medical Recovery:

If you are a disability retiree under age 60, OPM may require periodic re-evaluations of your medical condition to determine if you have recovered from your disability. If OPM finds you have recovered your disability payments will stop one year from the date of the medical examination showing your recovery or on the date you are reemployed in Federal service, whichever occurs first?

Restoration of Earning Capacity:

If you are a disability retiree under age 60, there is a limit on the amount you can earn from wages and self-employment and still be entitled to your annuity. Each year OPM will send you a questionnaire to complete and return in order to determine your earning for the previous calendar year. If your earnings in any calendar year equal at least 80% of the current salary rate of the position from which

you retired, your earning capacity will be restored. After you turn age 60, there is no restriction on the amount of wages or earning from self-employment you may receive

Receipt of Benefits from OWCP:

The approval of a claim for benefits by OWCP, US Dept of Labor, for work related injury of illness, does not automatically entitle an employee to FERS disability retirement. A claim for FERS disability retirement must also be filed with the Office of Personnel Management. If you are approved for disability retirement and elect to provide survivor benefit protection, you will protect the rights of your eligible survivors to receive annuity benefits after your death. In addition, this will protect your own annuity rights in the event you lose entitlement benefits from OWCP.

I would like to extend a very sincere thank you to National Human Relations Director, Sue Carney for providing the state of Michigan with OWCP training on November 18th and 19th. We had a wonderful time. A special thank you to Lucy Morton 480-481 Human Relation Director as well, Lucy always seems to take whatever task she is given to the next level. Lucy is responsible for the MPWU putting on this training, so that now many stewards and officers have this extremely important knowledge.

Until next time Brothers and Sisters remember, today your life hold for you endless possibilities. You have built a solid foundation, and you have worked hard for it... continue to do what is necessary to move forward one day at a time. Write down your dreams and tuck it away entrusting that all things will come at the right time. Keep sight always of what is important in life.

MAINTENANCE CRAFT DIRECTOR



by
Sterling
Bouier

Procedure For Newly PSE

Ensure that all those eligible have been submitted by their supervisor for clothing allowances, which are effective December 3, 2016 at their 90 day work mark. Also be aware that **new employees are not credited with and may not take annual leave until they complete 90 days of continuous employment** under one or more appointments without a break in service. Also ensure that they know that they are **eligible to put in a PAR for positions** available within their bid cluster and un-

less waived, **they may be required to stay at their present location for 18 months before being allowed a transfer.**

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.



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 17, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate, S-230 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate, S-221 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
U.S. Senate Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate, SH-328
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate, SH-513
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid, Chairman Johnson, and Ranking Member Carper:

The United States Postal Service is a critical lifeline throughout our country, connecting loved ones and families, delivering prescription drugs and other critical items, and allowing our businesses to ship products all over the world. It is an institution that has been relied upon by the American postal customer for more than two hundred years. While the importance of reliable mail delivery for customers, especially those living in rural areas, has not changed, the Postal Service's ability to perform that service has substantially declined, and it is critical that Congress take action on this topic when we consider comprehensive postal reform.

From mail processing plant consolidations, to reductions in post office hours, to the complete elimination of the overnight service standard, rural America has been hit especially hard in recent years by degradations in mail service. While the current service standard for First-Class Mail is 2-3 days, the actual delivery of mail can take far longer than this standard. This is unacceptable for postal customers in rural America and across the country, and it simply does not meet the requirement for universal quality of service by which the Postal Service is bound.

While we are encouraged by the postal reform legislation Chairman Chaffetz and Ranking Member Cummings reported out of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to improve the Postal Service's financial condition, we are deeply concerned by the lack of service improvements and protection provisions in the bill. For any comprehensive postal reform bill to have a chance of passing this Congress, it needs to truly address the key problem facing customers across the country, which is the need for better service performance.

The Postal Service's elimination of the overnight delivery standard in early 2015 had a sweeping impact on mail delivery and Postal employees' lives and jobs. This included further mail processing facility consolidations, equipment changes, added transportation costs, job relocations, and renegotiated contracts. The costs of going back to the July 2012 service

standard would be significant and should be carefully and accurately examined. In the meantime, it is critical for us to focus our attention on improving service performance.

Service performance is a different issue than simply looking at the service standard. Service performance is what the postal customer experiences every day and represents the ability of the Postal Service to actually deliver mail between two points within the current 2-3 day standard. In order to ensure that the Postal Service is able to perform within this current standard, there must be an accurate understanding of how long it takes for mail to be delivered in rural and urban communities throughout the country. Such information allows Congress and the Postal Service to tackle the most pressing postal service problem at hand: the lack of adequate delivery performance under the current 2-3 day First-Class Mail service standard.

Any comprehensive postal legislation should include the following service protections and improvements in order to meet that challenge:

- **Reliability** – The Postal Service needs a performance target system to ensure the accurate measurement of mail delivery across the country in urban and rural communities through an in-depth classification system.
- **Accountability & Transparency** – Performance information must be published online and operational plans developed when targets are not met.
- **Enforcement** – The Postal Service must take action to meet their operational plans and not be able to lower service standards to come into compliance with performance targets.
- **Continual Review** – Development and regular updates of a long-term solvency plan that would analyze the Postal Service's finances and make recommendations regarding affordable service options.

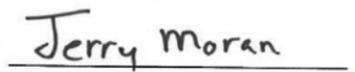
These concepts are included in bipartisan postal legislation introduced in the Senate. Furthermore, those concepts strike a healthy balance between a complete return to July 2012 standards and addressing the service performance issues we face today.

The Postal Service and its employees play a vital role in our nation. It is essential that we preserve the Postal Service's commitment to the American public. For this reason, improving service needs to be a critical piece of any comprehensive postal reform bill, along with the needed reforms to return the Postal Service to fiscal sustainability. Continued poor mail service hurts rural America, businesses, and our economy. Congress should take action to preserve and protect the vibrant institution that is our Postal Service so it, in turn, can help our communities and families truly thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Senator Heidi Heitkamp


Senator Jerry Moran


Senator Claire McCaskill


Senator Susan M. Collins


Senator Jon Tester


Senator Roy Blunt


Senator Tammy Baldwin


Senator Shelley Moore Capito


Senator Mark R. Warner


Senator Pat Roberts

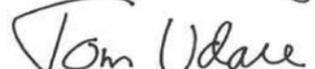

Senator Gary C. Peters


Senator Steve Daines

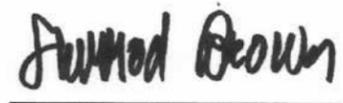

Senator Joe Manchin III

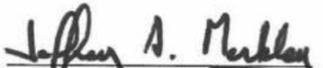

Senator Angus S. King, Jr.


Senator Al Franken


Senator Tom Udall

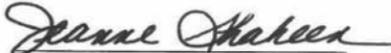

Senator Debbie Stabenow

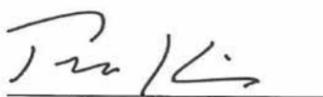

Senator Sherrod Brown


Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley

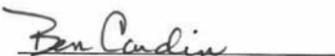

Senator Patrick Leahy


Senator Barbara A. Mikulski


Senator Jeanne Shaheen


Senator Tim Kaine


Senator Ron Wyden


Senator Benjamin L. Cardin


Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.


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AREA 4 DIRECTOR

Is Anybody Out There?

by **Angelynn Gebstadt**

I haven't heard too much from any of my members lately. So I'm going to assume annual leave submissions went well, no Amazon questions . . . So instead we are going to talk about the MOU assignment of PTF hub clerks.

Within two weeks of being converted from PSE to PTF if you didn't want

to work outside your office you must submit to your postmaster in writing starting your preference not to work outside of your office.

If you are already a PTF and don't want to work outside of your office or want to change your mind if you originally said you did-- you must provide a two week notice in writing to your postmaster stating you

do not want to work outside of your home facility.

If you change your mind and want to work outside your facility--you have to give seven days advance notice in writing. You can only change your mind three times a year.

So does this mean you won't have to work outside of your office??? NO!!

BUT it does mean management has to follow the outlined pecking order of who gets used first.

A. PTF's who have not indicated a preference to only work within their installation.

B. Available and qualified Postal Support Employee,

C. PTFs that have preference not to work in office in other installations.

AREA 8 DIRECTOR

PTF Scheduling . . .



by **Wendy Kempke**

uling and bringing in PSE's to work.

Violation of Article 7.1.B.2 per JCIM

A violation may occur when 1) management schedules a PSE for work which a part-time flexible employee could have performed instead and, 2) the part-time flexible employee had less than the 40 straight time hours (either work or a combination

of work and paid leave) during the service week. For example, if, when scheduling part-time flexible employees, management consistently and regularly underestimates the work which will remain at the end of the week for part-time flexible employees, and this results in PSE's working at the beginning or the middle of the service week while the part-time

flexible employees do not obtain a 40 hour week.

If you are a PTF and situations like this are happening in your office, please contact your Steward. Remember, we only have 14 days to file so time is always a factor.

In Solidarity.

District Meeting – OWCP Training

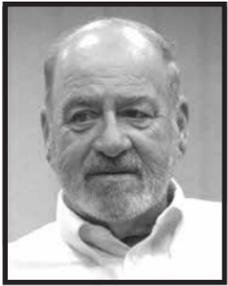


Stewards and Officers from across Michigan attend the OWCP Training presented by Sue Carney, APWU HQ Human Relations Director.



The 480-481 Area Local did take a moment to honor retiring Editor, Paul Felton, and Sue Carney who presented to Paul a 'Challenge Coin' in honor of his retirement with Paul's local President Roscoe Woods.

M·P·W·U·R·E·T·I·R·E·E·A·D·V·I·S·O·R



by
Al
LaBrecque

Back To The Future

“Behold the pale horse. Upon him rides death, and Hell follows him.” Revelations (Scripture)

Post Mortem: November 8th will FOREVER be marked on my calendar as Black Tuesday 2016! Anger and ignorance trumped dignity and wisdom. I believe that true leadership in defeat retreats to regroup their shattered supporters with words and examples of pride, poise, and class. I find that extremely difficult to display in any form in the wake of this abomination visited on the country, our principles, and assault on common decency that is embodied in the cruel face of America’s President-elect. The consequences; especially for Organized Labor, the working class, people of color, of the poor and disenfranchised, immigrants and dreamers, of seniors and the disabled, all of which he dissed with impunity; and many institutions we hold dear such as the U.S. Postal Service, should deeply trouble all thinking people regardless of political stripe.

Adjectives, some profane, to describe the person who will take over the Presidency and rule from the Oval Office, are too numerous to list here. Never in all my politically active life have I felt so demoralized and lost than I do as I write this column beginning on Veteran’s Day. On that; I salute my fellow vets; those who served in war, and those of my Cold War service, especially the continued service of our own MPWU Vet’s Dir., Brother John Smeekens. A bright spot in an otherwise grim day was when #3 Son, Noel, V.P. of his NALC Flint Mid-MI Branch, called to ‘Thank me for my service’. That thoughtfulness went directly to my heart, mindful that this generation may be paying attention. I’m wary of the person who will hold the title of Commander-In-Chief who will determine the fate of our military the next 4

years. This guy cleverly employed fear to rally the populace. Now, I definitely fear what he will attempt to accomplish with a stem to stern Republican Legislative Branch, with appointments to the Judicial Branch that will directly affect the nation for years to come and well after this administration. America! What have you done?!

An Examination of Conscience. Did you vote? Did you vote smart? Did you vote your pocketbook? With your heart or your head? Seniors; did you vote preservation of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid? OR, did you allow the talking heads on cable TV convince you that Hillary had it in the bag, so you stayed home? Were you an African-American voter who overwhelmingly supported Barack Obama in ‘08 & ‘12 because he was a black brother with a message of “Yes We Can”, and failed to vote in this election? Election voter participation results in the Blue Barrier “rust belt states”; Detroit, MI, Milwaukee, WI, and western PA reveal that because the African-American vote in those 3 target counties fell far below ‘08 & ‘12; thus MI, WI, and PA turned bloody “Red” handing the GOP its path to our defeat! But **SENIORS**; this is the most puzzling statistic of all! According to CNN exit polling; **voters 65 and older**, by a margin of 53%-45% favored Trump! Source: Alliance for Retired Americans. WHY?! Privatization of Social Security and a Medicare voucher system are high on the “Trumpie’s” extermination list. 53% of incredibly stupid seniors voted against their own retirement security, for what? I’ve completely lost faith in the level of American voter’s political intelligence. I would like to know what one positive thing compelled seniors to abandon the only Party whose platform seeks to protect, preserve, and improve our sacred earned entitlements.

But, that doesn’t leave the white, blue collar men AND women off the hook! We’re still the majority. Where were YOU?! Did you actually vote for that despot in full view of his bigotry, his incessant message of hate, disregard for the dignity of women, bald

faced lies? Did you buy into the immigration fears? What the Hell were you thinking?! Where was that vaunted Hispanic and Asian vote? As for the white, blue collar support for this guy and his message; I have only to look at my devastated hometown, Flint, MI. What do I see? Then I see acres of cracked concrete with weeds growing up from the cracks where the world’s largest auto plant, Buick, once stood. Where the huge AC Spark Plug/Delco complex once stood, Fisher Body #1 & #2. Ternstedt. Chevy in the Hole. All gone and they ain’t coming back! Gone with them are the thousands of good union waged jobs that equates to thousands of auto workers and their families who are also gone. Where did they go? How do we think they voted, if at all? Are these the angry white blue collar Americans who revolted against their own self-interests? Are they the blue collar black, Hispanic, Asian and just plain hard-working people who have been left behind, who have every reason to be angry enough to retaliate against their own self-interests? Cutting off one’s nose to spite their face! Now they, with the rest of working class and retired Americans, will reap the just desserts of their ill-conceived notion of change. Just to be fair and balanced; let’s not forget our Dem President’s Bill Clinton’s NAFTA as the evil root of job loss, and Obama’s proposed TPP, causing seniors and blue collar workers to bolt a Democratic Party that took their blind loyalty for granted. The Party leadership failed to heed the angst of the rank & file.

As a young kid fully aware of the War in Europe and the Pacific, the Axis of Hitler, Mussolini & Tojo, I’ve often wondered since; especially when viewing the History Channel the events of the rise of fascism in a democratic Germany with an obviously deranged Hitler whipping up massive crowds; that how supposedly intelligent people could so blindly follow such messenger of hate? How they could abandon principles of faith and decency for a messenger of false promises? Now I know! I still can’t fathom it, though I’ve seen it first-hand. Reluctant to make those comparisons during the 18 month election cycle, the parallels are frightening. As one pundit put it; and I paraphrase; “Fascism’s rise in the ‘30’s didn’t happen because it was strong, but because democracy was weak.” I could continue listing all my fears of what might occur with this amoral outsider (a lot like that “little corporal” from Austria) at the helm with a lock on the Legislative Branch and eyeing of the vacancy in the Judicial Branch. I’d only be repeating what they promised to dismantle including the Affordable Care Act, Social Security, Medicare, and God only knows what all. Nothing will be sacred or safe. The American dream has become a nightmare.

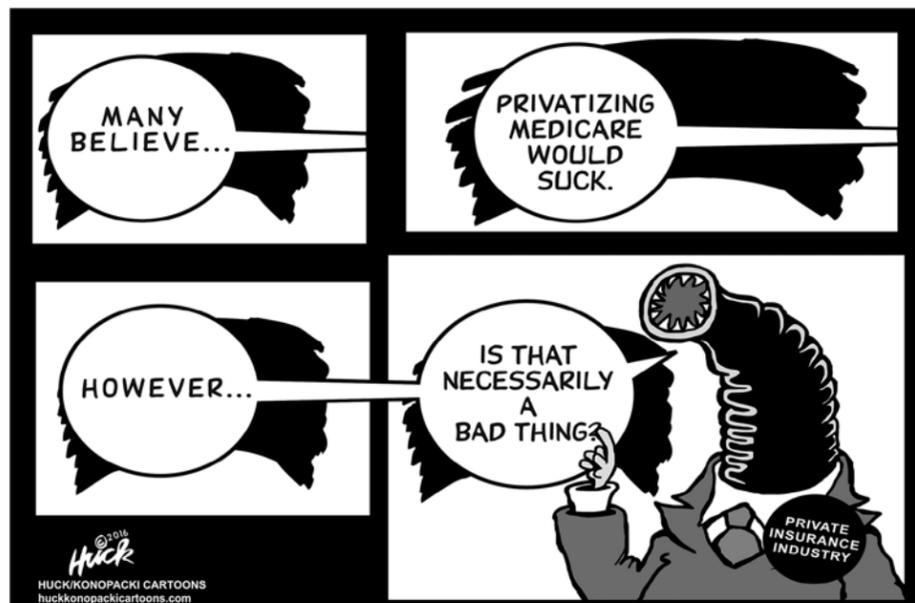
dicted because we didn’t take care of things? Or, is it the catalyst for a revolution to come that she said may not be bloody, but WILL be a revolution? She said I wouldn’t suffer, but that my children will. My ‘36-’37 Sit-down Strike UAW Pioneer Dad chimed in that; “Yes, but the working (man) will have to suffer first. I don’t mean suffer a little bit, I mean A Lot!” I’ve carried those admonitions with me for over 50 years. Has this come to pass, or is the worst yet to come as a result of this election? That truth and vision comes remarkably close to what we in Michigan should have seen all along. Already, right here in the Cradle of Labor State of Michigan; there’s white high school students bullying Hispanics and chanting “white power”. That’s beyond scary and disgusting! We’ve taken one giant step backward in the name of fear, hate and bigotry; the hallmark of the underground white supremacists who are crawling out from under their rocks. I can envision the KKK fishing their slightly yellowed sheets out from the back of their closets, and militias breaking out their camo’s and oiling their weapons. Even some Republicans are shaking in their boots! The Republican Party has been hijacked by the Trumpites. The Democratic Party’s in disarray; leaderless and without direction. Both our major Parties have lost their way. Maybe Bernie’s bunch had it right all along! ‘Ya Think?!

Condolences: On the untimely passing of our Sister, **Jennifer Gilbert**, Mother of Spencer, and Special Friend, John Canfield, State Retiree Chapter officer. To the Western MI Area Local and its membership. Jennifer’s Union influence on son Spencer to become involved as a young member of APWU lives on. Jennifer faced her illness and inevitable outcome with incredible courage and grace that is an inspiration for us all. “Eternal rest grant unto Jennifer, O’ Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon her. May her soul, and all the souls of the faithful departed, THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD, rest in peace.” Amen.

The Future? I know that we MUST avoid despair and the strong urge to just quit, fold our tent and divorce ourselves from it all. Just try to survive in the climate to come. Sit back and hope they don’t come for us; our S.S. & Medicare benefits. We have to keep the faith, keep the candle of hope lit. We have to suck it up and repair where we went wrong. There’s going to be a ton of expert opinion on the political pundit cable channels, the same gang of talking heads who misled us throughout. It’s too late for old duffers like me. Yes, I’ll continue the now even more uphill battle to preserve our S.S., Medicare, and annuity benefits. But, as a mentor to the under-35 young postal workers, I must tell you that the future is yours, and you had better resolve to step up

Is this the revolution my Mother pre-

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RETIREE PRESIDENT



by
**Paul
Browning**

In The Crosshairs

I'll leave others to dissect the recent Government elections. This column will instead be devoted to the very possible detrimental ramifications a Republican controlled Legislature and Administration will have on current and future USPS retirees.

Let's look back at what's happened so far. Going back to the 1980's under Ronald Reagan, the "Windfall Elimination Provision" (WEP) bill was passed. What that did was essentially if you were a CSRS retiree and eligible for Social Security, a lot of retirees' S.S. checks were cut to 40% of what they would have normally got. In my own case, I started receiving \$240 a month at age 65 minus \$104.90 monthly Medicare deductions instead of \$600 a month. (I hope I live long enough to at least get back the \$32,000 I and my employers paid into the Social Security Trust Fund—an iffy proposition considering my bad habits.) Then there is the fairly recent State of Michigan Republican passed legislation which taxes Government employee pensions. It didn't exist when I retired but now with a partial exemption for my birth year, it costs me hundreds of dollars a year. That's enough to pay my electric bill for quite

a few months. For CSRS employees a few years younger than me, it can cost thousands of dollars a year. And in case you didn't know it yet, your Social Security check is subject to Federal Income tax. So far the State of Michigan doesn't tax Social Security but with over one dozen other states doing so and government pension laws changed, you have to be at least a little paranoid about the same happening here under Republicans.

Let's face it. Government retirees and employees are the current whipping post for our alleged too generous pay and benefits according to the Republican controlled establishment.

Take a look around at what has recently happened to City, County, and State retirees. The City of Detroit retirees' benefits were drastically reduced. Public school teachers pensions and retirement benefits cost them more. Even recent USPS hires have to pay more towards their retirement. Here in my home area of Northern Michigan, several counties and small municipalities are claiming to be millions of dollars short in funding for retirees' benefits. Never mind that there seems to be plenty of public money to subsidize private development. (Can you say professional sports arenas? Whatever happened to the Silver Dome?) So, can Federal retirees be far behind in the rush to slash and burn our retiree-

ment benefits? Will I have to give up my extravagant one week vacation in the Upper Peninsula? No more parties?

Now perhaps you think your health care benefits are safe because of all that money the 2007 "Postal Accountability & Enhancement Act", PAEA, required USPS to pay for 75 years worth of future retiree health care costs. Think again Gomer. USPS has missed billions of dollars in payments and owes the U.S. Treasury a helluva lot of money. What's to stop Congress from passing legislation to cut retiree health care and benefits to make up for that debt? Would such legislation merely be viewed as a good "business decision" and signed by the President? And speaking of business decisions—if you are one of those people who think public services and the Government should be run like a business—many companies and even Government entities are declaring bankruptcy. (Hello Detroit again and a shout out to Puerto Rico plus full disclosure—I was born and graduated high school in Detroit and have a P.R. buddy) Such bankruptcy allows them to get out of signed legal contractual agreements to pay retirement benefits.

Under our new Congress and Administration you may get a small reduction in taxes, but will it be enough

to cover a decreased or frozen pension/Social Security check or increased Medicare payments? Of course there is always the favored Republican privatization plan for the above which supposedly would give you more money. (LMAO) But maybe you're an investment or TSP wizard or pay someone to it, do you seriously want to trust your entire retirement to Wall Street Temple moneychangers? And no Hillary, it was a bad idea to hang out with those fat cats.

So it looks like gloom and doom for retirees for the next couple of years. Newly elected politicians don't have to worry about the voters for a while. They are in Office and will make nice sounding statements on why you may be getting temporarily shafted but things will eventually work out for the better. Don't put up with it!! Call their local District and D.C. offices. Badgering them over the phone and taking up their staff's time is a lot more effective than an email or even a letter to which you get the "concerned" response.

APWU National Leadership has created a much ballyhooed "Grand Alliance". Now it's time for more than signing statements of support. It's time for "taking it to the streets" like the old Doobie Brothers song. Whether its streets in front of the Post Office or lo-
continued on page 8

— Back To The Future —

continued from page 6

and be an active part of it or you will be a victim of your own lack of involvement! We can teach, advise, pass on the history of how we got you to where you are, but it's up to you to learn, listen, and respect that history as your own.

Al's Shorts: APWU Retirees Dept. leadership telecon centering on the APWU Health Plan revealed that 9,000 members are still enrolled in the much higher premium **Self & Family** High Option, instead of the considerably lower premium of the **Self+One** High Option. If you are insuring just yourself and a spouse, or just you and one eligible dependent, the Self+One option will result in a considerable savings. I highly recommend retirees and seniors to take a hard look at your APWU Health Plan coverage, especially if you're still enrolled in Self & Family.

APWU HQ., Washington, D.C., the inside the Beltway think tank, is once again seeking retiree member involvement. This time it's selling the APWU Health Plan. I'm a satisfied customer of our health plan, but I don't "sell" insurance of any kind. More on that for another time. Before this it was to enlist retiree support to Stop Staples. Picket to protest consolidation of postal facili-

ties. To be legislatively active by either supporting or opposing certain bills in the House and Senate. And yes; retirees have shown up every time. Maybe it's time for APWU leadership at ALL levels to reciprocate by recognizing retiree fair representation in Convention. Either you want us, or you don't! Retirees are no longer content to just be the COPA or APWU general fund's cash cow. A paternalistic pat on the back just doesn't get it anymore. We're just old, not stupid.

APWU Health Plan in rural Michigan is a tough sell and huge problem no one seems to want to address. Cigna, our Plan's umbrella, negotiates in-network providers in the high population density urban areas and generally most hospitals even in largely rural areas. But NOT rural Michigan health care providers. Cigna hands it off to a third party who negotiates "bundling" several insurance plans; APWU, NALC, Mailhandlers, Seafarer's Union, etc. Rural based health care providers aren't prone to bundling. This results in active and retired APWU members turning to the more expensive BC/BS that's accepted by most providers in rural Michigan. I don't think that's exclusive to our State. However, I must clarify that upon becoming Medicare eligible, this is no

longer a problem with Medicare as the primary insurer and APWU Health Plan secondary.

Alpena, MI, NARFE Thunder Bay Chapter #1487 is dissolved! The Chair passed away with cancer. The V.P. simply said he didn't want to do it anymore and walked. The Secretary, a former postmaster recently widowed found a sweetie and moved away. The previous Chair, former Rural Letter Carrier and staunch republicin dropped out, leaving the Treasurer and me as the appointed Legislative Chair. The Treas., also a former postmaster, said she couldn't afford the dues and quit. I transferred to Flint Chapter #285. Indifference and apathy prevail. I belong to NARFE primarily to receive the magazine as an excellent information source. I admit that I don't dig rubbing elbows with management, retired or not, and not too keen about NARFE's non-partisan fundamental's.

Black tie or Blue Collar? I've just got to say it. I was critical of the Burrus black tie & fancy gown installation of officers, seemingly a long tradition of ostentation unbecoming of a Labor Union. Okay, suit & tie dressy dress. Let's look like a Labor Union beginning with our Installation of Officers. I subscribe to the Leo

Persails creed that; "We don't think like 'em. We don't act like 'em. And we don't want to look like 'em." Okay, so maybe I AM a dinosaur.

Holiday Message: Relax & enjoy your Thanksgiving Day with good food, good friends & Family, and lots of good football games. (No political discussions allowed!). Then there's Christmas and New Year's Day 2017. Can the political correctness by avoiding saying "Merry CHRISTMAS"! That's what it is; Christmas! Or, feel free to express the secular version as Happy "Holiday's" if that's your personal preference. Just don't pretend it's not Christmas, Jesus Christ and Santa Claus, because it might offend someone. We should have respect for the holidays of all cultures and how they choose to celebrate them. Just please don't trash what should be the joy of the season, both the celebration of the birth of Jesus, and the sharing of gifts under the plastic Christmas tree.

Michelle and I wish ALL our Sisters and Brothers A Merry & Blessed Christmas, and A Happy & Healthy 2017. Then, it's back to work!

Solidarity Forever!
Al LaBrecque, Retiree Advisor

VETERANS' DIRECTOR

Veterans' News



by John P. Smeekens

MY APOLOGY

You know, I've been doing these for a while and you would think that I would have it all together by now, but I didn't. I neglected to wish all my Brother and Sister Veterans a HAPPY VETERANS' DAY!!! Please accept my sincere apologies for doing the cranial rectal inversion thing.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Merry Christmas to you and your family. I hope it is a blessed, and safe one for you and yours. Keep safe, don't drink and drive, eat lightly. And don't forget our troops. Say a prayer, or whatever you do, for them and their families.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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

MY HEALTH VET UPDATE

Recently, the VA launched an updated

version of its MyHealthVet website to make it more user and mobile friendly. My HealthVet is designed to help veterans track and manage their VA prescriptions, appointments and health care records. Check it out!!!

THE SOUND OF HEALING

More than 30 million Veterans experience hearing loss. Due to frequent exposure to loud noises from weaponry and aircraft, many service members develop conditions like tinnitus – a ringing, buzzing or other type of noise that originates in the head. It may not be the first issue people think of, but hearing loss is the most prevalent service-connected disability among Veterans, bringing significant challenges to their daily lives. That's why the VA is working hard to advance audiology research and care. Throughout their health system, researchers are conducting a wide range of audiology studies, from biomedical investigations to large clinical trials. If your experiencing a hearing problem, contact a local VSO and get the ball rolling.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

According to the National Cancer Institute, 12.4% of women born in the United States today will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives. An

alarming statistic, especially when you consider that women are also the fastest-growing group of U.S. Veterans. It's one of the many reasons why the VA will always stress the importance of early detection. For nearly two decades, the VA has led the nation in breast cancer screening for women. They encourage all women between the ages of 50 and 75 to get mammograms every two years, because it's one of the most effective ways to detect breast cancer early, which makes a big difference in a woman's chance of surviving. In fact, the overall five-year survival rate from breast cancer is nearly 90%. And if the cancer is caught while it is still located only in the breast, the survival rate increases to nearly 99%. The VA's success in Women's Health goes beyond mammograms, as their employees work hard to continuously improve the many services they offer. Their efforts include: #1-Increasing access to care for female Veterans; #2-Investing more than \$390 million in the remodeling and construction of exam and inpatient rooms; #3-Providing mental health, homelessness prevention and other services designed to meet the unique needs of female Veterans'. They know there's more work to be done, but with early detection, increased access and better care, they're well-positioned to meet the changing needs of women Veterans nationwide—this month, next month and far into the future.

OIF and OND; HEADS UP

Service members who handled or demolished explosive ordinance during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn may have been exposed to toxic chemical warfare agents, such as mustard agents or sarin, and may experience related health effects. The VA and the Department of Defense are working to identify and contact active duty service members and Veterans' who may have been exposed to CWA's. Veterans' who believe they may have been exposed to CWA's and have not already been contacted, please call the DoD hotline at 800-497-6261. For more information on exposure to CWA's, visit the VA website.

MVAA NAMES WOMEN VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Six women, including five veterans, have been selected to represent the state's more than 45,000 women veterans on the Michigan Women Veterans Advisory Board. The board

will advise the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency on matters relating to women veterans such as economic opportunity and career advancement, as well as help expand awareness of available resources and services to the state's female veteran population.

Board members are:

- Heather Byington, veteran recruiter at Quicken Loans; Air Force veteran.
Yulanda Curtis, clinical teaching fellow at the University of Michigan Law School.
Dr. Tamara Hullender, director, professional readiness at the Center for Student Services, College of Education and Human Services, Central Michigan University; Army veteran.
Dr. Sylvia Rafels, retired Air Force colonel.
Sarah Robb, business analyst at DTE Energy; Army National Guard veteran.
Kari Smith, virtual teaming subsection manager at General Electric Aviation Systems; retired Air Force lieutenant colonel.

In addition to the six board members, three ex officio members will serve on the board including Tim Loney, MVAA's Deputy Director of Targeted Initiatives, Renee Haley of the Michigan Women's Commission and Robert McDivitt of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration.

COINS ON A TOMBSTONE

Have you ever been in a cemetery and saw coins laying on a tombstone? There is actually a reason behind it. A coin left on a headstone lets the deceased soldier's family know that somebody stopped by to pay their respect. Leaving a Penny means you visited. A Nickel means that you and the deceased soldier trained at boot camp together. If you served with the soldier, you leave a Dime. A Quarter is very significant because it means that you were there when that soldier was killed.

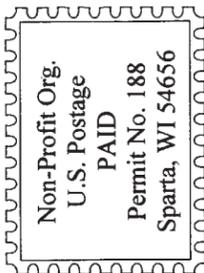
Supposedly the tradition became popular here in the United States during the Vietnam war. It is believed it was a way to show respect without getting into an uncomfortable political discussion about a war that was very controversial. In general, however, this tradition can be traced to as far back as the Roman Empire. It was a way to give a buddy some spending money for the hereafter.

In The Crosshairs

continued from page 7
cal and D.C. Congressional offices, our National Union must organize Days of Action by all members of the Grand Alliance. Ben Franklin said it for a reason-"We must all hang together or we will surely hang separately". Right on Ben.

In Solidarity.

DEADLINE
The deadline for articles for the January-February issue of the Michigan Messenger is February 3, 2017



Return to APWU/MPWU
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Lansing, MI 48909-7303

Change of Service Requested