

# Michigan MESSENGER



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## PRESIDENT



by  
**Michael  
Mize**

# We Need To Work Together

We just got back from a great trip to Washington DC. The trip was to meet with our representatives on Postal Legislation. I must take this opportunity to thank our MPWU Legislative Director, Roscoe Woods. Roscoe did a fantastic job of getting our meetings set up so we could get in and meet with all the Michigan Representatives and Senators. We only missed having a meeting with a couple and have meetings set with them in District here in Michigan soon. I should point out that in many cases we meet with the staffer that handles Postal issues and not the Representative themselves.

I want to say I appreciate the snow plows and snow moving capabilities in Michigan more after that trip as well. A couple of inches of snow will cause all sorts of delays in cities like DC and here we don't even notice. The little snowfall while we were in the city made for poor walking conditions around the Capitol, but we all pushed through and made our meet-

ings. Walking in the House and Senate office buildings on the poor weather day you could tell they were a bit out of sorts. But, every Representative office for Michigan was open and even if they were a little short staffed in the morning they all still meet with us.

This was my first trip to DC for this purpose. In the conversations with other Presidents and Legislative Directors I understand that in many or most cases the meetings would not always be well received. With the bipartisan leadership of Chaffetz and Cummings



**Michigan State President and Local Presidents and Officers.**

*Photo by APWU*

on HR756 our meetings to discuss the legislation were all well received. It seemed that most were in support of the language and happy to see reform that appears to be supported by most and accepted by both parties.

I realize there are some that do not like HR756 and do not support it. Even I have posed questions about certain parts of the language and why certain things are not in it. Is the language perfect, NO. But I would ask this simple question, when do we see perfect language get passed?

We all have different perspectives and if I was to believe we had perfect language, well you may disagree. That is the problem, there really is no such thing as perfect language. Can there be language that is acceptable or maybe called perfect for the storm we are in the middle of and can we get the language passed? That remains to be seen. What I can say is that with the storm we currently have on Capitol Hill and the storm that the USPS is in concerning prefunding future retiree healthcare there is no question that there needs to be a bipartisan effort to address it.

So, is HR756 the Bipartisan legislation we are looking for? As the President that was elected to represent the State I believe this legislation has enough support with the vested parties to get through. The issue is will it make it as it is or will someone try to change it along the way? I listened to the APWU leadership and long term Postal and APWU advocate Representative Cummings and believe this is what we need now. We need all sides and parties to work together to see this to the end. We have other legislation that we can work for to address other issues that  
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## EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



by  
**Mike  
Long**

# Where Does The Time Go?

As I sit down here to write this article, something I have been remiss in doing for quite some time, I am wondering how fast time does fly. However, enough day dreaming and reminiscing and back to giving you some valuable information. However, just as we do in this publication bi-monthly, or on the website, or with training and conventions, information is not to be kept within, it is meant to be shared. So I encourage you to share what you have learned within these pages with fellow members. Some of them don't read the paper, and while I know it is their own fault and problem, we are all our Brother's keeper.

Which brings me to the first item... Uniform Clothing Allowances. If you are entitled to get a clothing allowance, make sure you are put in for it. With how the Postal Service does it, management must go into Blue and input you. It is not automatic. And there are issues now that even if you are entitled, you might be denied. If you are entitled to one and are not, contact the union.

While we are talking about contacting the union, I would ask that you please let your union know or your Area Director if you are in a RMPOs (Level 4 or 6) and have carriers working out of your office. As a Level 6 or 4 office it is only the clerk in the office. I have even heard that there are some Level 2 offices with carriers in them (but this type of offices is staffed with PMRs). More than likely, they are Rural carriers

and as such, they perform selling stamps and such on the road. The Postmaster is responsible for the stamps and as such, should be the one issuing the stamps to the carriers, not the clerks. If you have carriers in your office, please let the union know.

Recently I was in an Arbitration where management was using statements that fellow employees wrote against another employee to justify the other employee's removal. WTF? You might not like the employee; heck you might even despise the employee, but why would you do something to jeopardize someone's livelihood. If management has enough on the employee to terminate him or her, then let them attempt to do so; however, please do not assist in this. Just remember, what will happen one day when

for some reason, you might have something go wrong in your life, and your co-workers write a statement on you? Don't think it will happen? Neither did the person you just wrote the statement on! Make management do their own job! You are under no obligation to write a statement. While the ELM does state that you must cooperate with an investigation, it doesn't mean you must write statements against someone.

Do you have Lead Clerks in your facility? Are they PSEs or CCAs? If so, contact your union immediately. Unless no career employees wanted to do the job, Article 25 is specific. It is chosen by seniority.

And in closing arrangements are all set for the 2017 Assembly in May in Southfield. May 24 - 26, 2017.  
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LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

# Two Days On The Hill



by Roscoe Woods

On March 15th, 2017 I returned from a 5 day trip to Washington D.C. at the March 2017 National Presidents/Legislative Conference. While at this conference the MPWU took 2 days on the hill to meet with as many members of the Michigan delegation we could.

I want to thank MPWU/FMAL President Mike Mize, DDAL President Keith Combs, WMAL President Amy Puhalski as well as TCL Vice President Ron Krumrie and his grandson Kayden for all their support and hard work attending the various meetings. I also want to thank them for dealing with the chaos that is their legislative director trying to deal with a fluid meeting schedule and some pretty crazy DC weather.

As you will see based on the schedule below, at times we had to split up so we could take meetings in different buildings that were at the same time or within a few minutes of each other.

A quick breakdown of our schedule was like this:

**Saturday**

APWU national officers reports, legislative update on HR 756 and HR 760 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday**

Discussion on NPC agenda items from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Monday**

9:15 a.m. Rep. Lawrence  
10:00 a.m. Rep. Conyers  
11:00 a.m. Rep. Walberg  
12:00 p.m. Rep. Upton  
1:30 p.m. Rep. Bergman

**Tuesday**

8:00 a.m. Sen. Stabenow  
8:30 a.m. Sen. Peters  
10:00 a.m. Rep. Trott  
11:00 a.m. Rep. Huizenga  
12:00 p.m. Rep. Levin  
12:30 p.m. Rep. Amash  
12:30 p.m. Rep. Mitchell  
1:00 p.m. Rep. Dingell  
1:30 p.m. Rep. Moolenaar

It was a pretty hectic couple of days but we all believed it important to meet with as many reps as possible. As a frame of reference my step counter hit 18,000 on Monday, 20,000 Tuesday.

We had a late meeting set with Rep. Kildee's staff on Monday but it was cancelled and we will follow up with him in Flint soon enough. In most instances our meetings with the Democrats was to thank them for their continued support on postal issues and ask them if they had any questions for us.

A common theme from all parties we met with was that when the respective interests came to the capital to discuss postal reform at this point all seemed to agree despite many reservations that this bill was worth voting for.

With respect to Rep. Bishop his scheduler never got back to us and I reached out with our concerns. After receiving our email she called me back and we will be meeting with the Representative in person on April 13th, 2017 at his office in Brighton MI. HR 756 may well cleared the house by then but there are plenty of other issues important to this union and its membership we will discuss with Representative Bishop.

As I sit writing this I notice that HR 756 has cleared the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. This is its first hurdle on its way to the house floor. Next this bill will be reviewed by the Ways and Means Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committees. If there are no changes we expect it to land on the house floor soon.

I want to take a moment to thank Minority Ranking House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Member Reprehensive Cummings from Maryland. In the past GOP leadership has used postal reform as an excuse to gut our collective bargaining rights, attack our injured sisters and brothers as well as trying to insert other nefarious items that do more to undermine our

rights in ways that truthfully are unrelated to postal reform.

Rep. Cummings forged a deal with ranking member and committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz out of Utah that is far from perfect. This bill makes sweeping changes to not only current postal employee's health care options but places a new financial burden on retirees by making Medicare B now a mandate when we turn 65. What is significant is that Rep. Cummings seems to have an agreement with the GOP leadership that this bill will move through the house and there will be no amendments added that could break the coalition.

In the past quite often it wasn't the first marked up bill that put us at odds, it was destructive amendments. I have been to our nation's capital several times to discuss postal reform. This trip was surreal in that I got a much keener sense of how little clout the democrats have in this legislative session, that realization makes it that much more remarkable (in my opinion) what Representative Cummings was able to accomplish.

HR 756 still has a long way to go, at times the best deals reached fall apart in a second. We made it clear to those republicans and democrats alike that there are still serious issues that are hurting America's postal service and as such damaging one of the most trusted brands in the federal government. We made it clear we intend after this issue is settled to come back and address our concerns with the reduction in delivery standards, the attacks on 6 day delivery and other attempts to subvert our collective bargaining rights.

We will be back to DC and we will continue to talk common sense postal "service" reform and in the process we will not only be the voice of our membership, but the voice of the American people.

On a side note while in Washington D.C. we took a moment to walk over and see the newest memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. If you have not yet been to D.C. I encourage you to go and see this specific memorial. I am at a loss to describe how utterly breathtaking this is.

Wikipedia notes that "the memorial is located on a 4-acre site in West Potomac Park that borders the Tidal Basin, southwest of the National Mall. The memorial is near the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial and is intended to create a visual "line of leadership" from the Lincoln Memorial, on whose steps King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington, to the Jefferson Memorial."

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- 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) 822-3443  
F: (616) 977-1020  
e-Mail: mdlblong@gmail.com
- Secretary-Treasurer.....Darren Joyce**  
U: (810) 239-0931; C: (810) 444-5142  
F: (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: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 819-7403  
F: (517) 332-4391  
e-Mail: the.pacer@yahoo.com
- Legislative Director..... Roscoe Woods**  
U: (248) 543-3262; C: (248) 709-8249  
F: (248) 543-2750  
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**  
C: (517) 677-6198  
e-Mail: tlothamer@msn.com
- Maintenance Craft Director.....Sterling Bouier**  
W: (313) 965-1398; U: (313) 226-8685  
C: (313) 575-8254  
e-Mail: dapmdn1327@yahoo.com
- Motor Vehicle Service Craft Director..... Joe Wrobel**  
U: (248) 543-3262; W: (248) 546-7146  
C: (586) 201-7356; F: (248) 543-2750  
e-Mail: yrubnu@hotmail.com
- Veterans Director.....John Smeekens**  
U: (248) 543-3262; H: (586) 286-2304  
e-Mail: mpwuvetdirector@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; H: (734) 753-0438  
e-Mail: relyapwu480-481@charter.net
- Area 4 Director (484/485).....Angelyn Gebstadt**  
C: (810) 516-7970; U: (810) 239-0931  
F: (810) 257-1514  
e-Mail: fmalveep@comcast.net
- Area 5 Director (486/487).....Jan Newman**  
U: (989) 895-5557; C: (989) 327-5405  
H: (989) 401-6287  
e-Mail: heldman187@gmail.com
- Area 6 Director (488/489).....VACANT**  
*If you know of someone that would be willing to fill this position and represent our membership, please contact President Mize.*
- Area 7 Director (490/491).....VACANT**  
*If you know of someone that would be willing to fill this position and represent our membership, please contact President Mize.*
- Area 8 Director (492).....Wendy Kempke**  
W: (517) 263-5809; C: (419) 377-4595  
e-Mail: kempke.wk@gmail.com
- Area 9 Director (493/494).....VACANT**  
*If you know of someone that would be willing to fill this position and represent our membership, please contact President Mize.*
- Area 10 Director (496).....Vince Nichols**  
W: (231) 933-1020/4502; C: (231) 499-9333  
F: (231) 922-1863  
e-Mail: vince00tc@yahoo.com
- Area 11 Director (497).....Laura Stafford**  
W: (231) 238-7242; C: (313) 506-0917  
H: (989) 448-0181  
e-Mail: lauras497@aol.com
- Area 12 Director (498/499).....Theresa Granquist**  
U: (906) 774-6303; C: (906) 396-6103  
F: (906) 774-7356  
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**  
C: (989) 213-3068  
e-Mail: hystreet@att.net w

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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**EDITOR**



by  
**John  
Greathouse**

# Just When You Thought It Was Safe To Turn Your TV Back On . . .

With everything that is coming out of DC my face hurts from "face palming" myself over and over!

**INTERNET PRIVACY**

With our good buddies the Republicans' latest little treat, allowing our internet provider to sell our internet history, websites you have been to, and much, much more!

There was a town hall meeting with Rep Tim Walberg and it was a packed hall, 66 seats. That was all the Fire Marshall would let in, they needed almost 30 seat and a larger hall. When Walberg was asked about why he took a \$38,000 donation to his reelection fund, did that influence his vote, and he managed to say with a smile that it did not but he could not give a good reason why other than the typical talk around of an issue he and his ilk are famous for!

At least Timmy is putting himself

out there to meet with his constituents unlike Rep Mike Bishop. His staff has been going out and meeting with them through "Mobile Office" but the only way to actually see Bishop is to be at one of his "controlled" events with select groups in attendance. He has

Senate is not playing along is going forward in Bi-Partisan style to get to the bottom of it... maybe... someday I hope!

**MEMBERSHIP IN THE APWU**

Looking at my office, there needs to

**GETTING ACTIVE AND INVOLVED**

Can't find an extra few hours a week to get involved with running your local, I understand that your world is busy and sometimes VERY busy! I do know you have 5 minutes a week to make a phone call to your local Congressman and express your views on legislation that is going to have a very direct impact on you! I have already mentioned the Internet Privacy issue but how about Health Care? You might think that is not a problem because you have a health plan through the FEHB...

Not if the House of Reps has their way! There is a bill that will affect your health care you have now and what kind of changes might happen when you get to retirement! Not to mention the replacement for the ACA that is a train wreck just waiting on a place to pile up! Remember - There is a light at the end of the tunnel and it IS the oncoming Train!

So take some time out of your busy schedule and go to a union meeting or make a few calls or even better, ask your steward if they need any help with something. In Solidarity.

**"So take some time out of your busy schedule and go to a union meeting or make a few calls or even better, ask your steward if they need any help with something."**

not been seen in an "open" meeting since October, that's representation for you!

**RUSSIA AND THE HACK**

Russia... Did they or didn't they mess with the elections? My best guess is yes but why and how plus who on this side of the pond was involved. Whatever they may have been involved in, stirred up the voters, some in to a frenzy! And it seems that the House has no desire to actually find out as they keep postponed meeting and canceled some witnesses but the

be a sudden and rapids influx of new and younger members to start getting active and learning the ropes on how to deal with management before everyone who is now doing it retires! I am sure that this is going on across the state and country and I am not alone with this concern. Younger members, under 40, you guys and gals need to step it up and engage because in the 2 to 5 years, the Local and State Offices will most likely be retired or looking at it very closely! If you do not act I can guarantee you that management will take advantage of it and you!

**ASSOCIATE OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE**



by  
**Sterling  
Bouier**

# — Congratulations —

Hello MPWU Brothers and Sisters, I would like to begin by congratulating all the new APWU/MPWU members throughout the state. There has been a lot of hiring going on at the postal service. It is our duty as Union members and officials to ensure that these new employees are made aware of their rights, benefits, and opportunities to create change in the postal service.

I would also like to congratulate the new stewards as well. I thank you for taking on the responsibility and leadership role to represent your co-workers and protect their contractual rights. I encourage more members to take a more active role in unionism, especially the younger new generation of workers, whom I expect to be employed by the postal service for the next few decades or so. Me, myself have had an active role in the Union for 20+ years and am more than willing to share my knowledge, experiences, etc . . and look forward to the day I am able to confidently pass on the baton and know that the organization will continue to grow and prosper.

In the meantime, I will continue to represent to the best of my ability. I fight daily and it seems to be a never ending battle at times, but I know at the end of the day my efforts **do make a difference!** And that mak-

ing a difference is why I will continue to do what I do. **And we as a Union will continue to do what we do!**

As always feel free to contact me if there are and questions

or if you are in need of my services. I am here to serve. I can be reached at 313 965-1398 or at [sbouier@apwudetroit.org](mailto:sbouier@apwudetroit.org).

In Union Solidarity.

## We Need To Work Together

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we want, but the Service needs this first. None of the parties are getting everything but everyone is getting something. This is how it works in most cases if we can get things to work. It is a negotiation.

It is a fact that we as Postal employees and APWU members are a very diverse group with many different feelings and positions. It is also a fact that while the candidate that I preferred did not get elected there are many members that voted for the winning candidate and down the party line for all the offices. So now we need to work together for the things that we can all agree on. I will continue to advocate for legislation that will benefit the USPS and the APWU, no matter what side of the aisle the Representative sits on. But I need your help too, especially if you are one of our members that succeeded in seeing

your candidates elected. No matter what side the Representative's sit on they listen more intently to those that support them in elections and they want us to vote for them again. When there is Postal reform legislation or any other legislation that is good for or bad for the USPS or the APWU, reach out

to your Representative and explain to them how it helps or not and what you want them to do to earn your vote. We may disagree on some issues but on these core Postal issues we should be on the same page for the most part.

In Solidarity.

## Where Does The Time Go?

*continued from page 1*  
The hotel is already full, which is a good sign. Look forward to seeing you all and getting trained. While we are at it, by the time this edition comes out, the contract should be signed on the 2018 Convention. As the delegates decreed at the last convention, we will be heading north to Traverse City and to Great Wolf Lodge we go. Dates are tentatively set for May 3-5, 2018. Start thinking now what you would like to see

either changed in the contract or expounded upon. This is where we make the motions that give our officers an idea of what we want, where we want to go, and how we will get there. Your input makes the difference and makes this union one of the best around.

If I don't see you at the upcoming Educational Assembly, I hope each of you have a great spring and summer. Until next time . . .

AREA 2 DIRECTOR



by  
Patrick  
Chornoby

# It's Gonna Be A Long Four Years

Greetings Union Brothers and Sisters.

As this new year is upon us, I see we have a whole new set of challenges as postal employees. Not only from USPS management, but from a Republican controlled House, Senate and Presidency. Seriously, we postal employees are in for a long and troublesome four years with our newly elected administration. Our President, is an anti-worker, pro-establishment president. His history alone tells us that workers and Labor are going to have many disagreements and more than one battle over the next few years with him. We are not alone of course. The Republicans will have many battles with unions, women's groups, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Black Lives Matter groups,

the LGBT, the pro-choice groups, the middle class, the tax payers – darn near everyone. As we all can see, Trump's promise to "drain the swamp" has turned to "lets FILL the swamp with anti-worker CEOs!" His appointment of big business executives to run the country will hurt the working class, placing a heavier tax burden on our plates. All the while, focusing on slashing regulations, including workplace safety, which will directly hurt each and every postal employee. Yes, we have a long fight ahead of us my Brothers and Sisters.

**CHANGE-OF-SCHEDULES**

The Postal Service is extremely short staffed in most of our offices in the District. Instead of Human Resources hiring career employees, management has found a way to help get the mail processed without adding an additional monetary burden to their budgets. Unfortunately, management has started to request employees to change their work schedules to accommodate the mail flow. At times, employees are glad

to change their schedules, especially if they can end their work shift earlier, or not be forced to work overtime. The problem comes in when management is not signing a PS FORM 3189, and simply adjust their work time without paying them any out-of-schedule premium pay which is a 50% premium pay. Under the Handbook F-401, Supervisor's Guide to Scheduling and Premium Pay, as well as identified in the Employee & Labor Relations Manual chapter 4, if the employer wants to change the schedule of a Full Time Regular, they MUST inform you the Wednesday prior to the service week of the change. If this advance notice is not given to you, you are entitled to work your regular schedule. If they do let you know the Wednesday prior to the week of the schedule change, management MUST still pay you out-of-schedule premium pay of 50% more per work hour. There are no exceptions to this rule unless requested by the employee and agreed to by the union or for training. Remember that any time management approaches you to

change your schedule to accommodate them, they must monetarily compensate you for it. Don't overlook this employee benefit. If management had to pay us out-of-schedule pay for every time they changed our schedules, this may put pressure on them to get our offices staffed properly.

**2015 – 2018 NATIONAL AGREEMENTS**

I am sure you have all been updated that our new contracts are available for purchase at headquarters level. I don't want to sound petty, but am I the only one at our level that has a problem with our National charging Stewards and Officers, in fact any dues paying member, \$8 for a copy of our Collective Bargaining Agreement? A book we need to properly represent members of the American Postal Workers Union? The cost may seem petty to some, but at \$8.00 a book, I think our National Union could have done better.

Until next time . . .

AREA 4 DIRECTOR

# — Seniority Roster —

by Angelynn Gebstadt

Thank you for all the kind words and encouragement while I was off.

So . . . 2017. . . as most of you should be aware of, I have contacted ALL of your Postmasters to keep them in line with the local memo and have requested seniority rosters for each office. The response was interesting. NO your seniority roster cannot be a hand-written "13" tacked to the wall. I provided each of the Postmasters an example of what I was looking for.

Your roster should be a webcoins seniority report. — AND I know this is a stretch but it should be what??? . . . In seniority order from oldest to newest. It should also contain one Craft — those of you with custodians, maintenance should be on their own roster. PSE's are not career employees and should be on their own roster.

YES, if you are an installation with an RMPO the seniority roster as well as Holiday and Overtime list must be posted in all the offices of the installation.

— Speaking of OT — its a new quarter. The new OT list should now be up in all offices that have full-time or NTFT employees.

If the above is not the case contact me.

AO PTF's — if you received a chunk of cash last year for the Global settlement and haven't received any money this year and you are in Area 4 contact me. The last payment went out last month and you should have already have seen it in your paychecks.

AREA 10 DIRECTOR

# Can You Be Replaced By A Hub Clerk?

by Vince Nichols

I've seen a lot of issues coming up recently on PTF clerks in an Installation and Office being replaced by Hub clerks from another office. Please remember, at your home of-

fice you can't be replaced by a hub clerk unless you are going into overtime status for the day and/or then for the week in most instance. A hub clerk may possibly work simultaneous hours with you without there

being a violation. All PTF's in level 18 offices should be watching the amount of hours in their office and if the Postmaster is properly covering the office and abiding by the contract in reporting clerk, bargaining unit work hours on the Postmaster 1260. If you believe there are discrepancies or you have concerns, please call your Union steward.

master in writing their preference not to work in offices in other installations (pp 349-350 CBA). This is clearly a choice for clerks that prefer not to work in other offices in other installations.

Many small office employees have also questioned the bad house keeping practices in their office as well as health and safety concerns. If you have a health and safety concern, please fill out a form 1767, by following the directions on the form. Please make sure the Union receives a copy of your completed 1767, with Management's response to your concerns and to the issue at hand.

Always remember the most important person in your office to protect your job....is you.

Last week we had 2 PSE's employees still not receiving holiday pay, in which they were entitled. They received a payout adjustment, but this just shows us that some things implemented in the new contract, still haven't taken effect in the field.

Another new contract opportunity is for PTF clerks to notify their Post-



Amy Puhalski, Sen. Gary Peters (D) MI, TCL Vice President Ronald Krumrie, his grandson Kayden Krumrie and Keith Combs. Photo by Amy Puhalski, President WMAL

ASSOCIATE OFFICE REPRESENTATIVE



by  
Thomas  
Lothamer

# — Team Player —

Pretty motivating words when you're competing in a sporting event or trying to make it through basic training. The most inspiring words in World history have been spoken to emphasize, to unite and rise up, finish the challenge.

What are the boundaries for this mentality? Not that I haven't been motivated in much the same way. But where do we draw the line? Looking around the Postal Service in the Associate Offices (Level 20 and below), "loaner clerks" appears to have some confusion. When you're traveling from your home office physical location to work (either voluntary or assigned) in another office then you are entitled to travel time on the clock and mileage. If a Postmaster tells you that they will not pay you because it puts you into

"overtime." Don't accept that answer, overtime isn't illegal! You are not being a Team Player by allowing the Postal Service to rob you of all of these pay opportunities. Violation of exercising your contractual right to be paid appropriately is a demonstration of violating your labor rights.

Crossing Craft - there continues to be reports of carriers performing Clerk Craft work. Allowing carriers to do break down, distribution (letters, flats, parcels), unload/load trucks, pull collection mail, post office box mail, mark ups, window. The M-41, and TL-4 has language addressing clerks staying until all carriers return for the day. I'm sure these are allotted hours taken out of our "budget" or ability to take time off (which is also a violation-denial of leave). These are another action that is presented towards you to make you feel like a "Team Player" by looking the other way. If you start adding it up, there are a lot of things that are

negatively impacting your pocket that pigeon holes you into thinking you're a team player.

Safety - Assuming that clerks are doing all of the cleaning in offices with two hours or less per day instead of "contract cleaners," (which they are not and continues to be a violation). Training or lack thereof is another budgetary oversight which continues to be an issue. Washing a window or cutting the grass are things most of us have done, however when injured due to the fact that the Post Office couldn't or wouldn't give the employee the agreed upon preventative training required prior to performing these tasks then that increases the Post Offices bottom line paid out to workman comp cases. It's cheaper to train us but somehow this keeps getting pushed onto the back burner and there goes that Team Player attitude going again by not pushing the issue with your Postmaster. This is even being reported in those offices

that have regular building maintenance custodians.

PSE - If you're in a 4 hour office and a PSE Clerk and instructed to work in a 6 hour office or a level 18 by a Postmaster then you are in violation of our contract even if it is part of your RMPO. It seems like no big deal however this action prevents your Union from getting these offices properly staffed with Career Clerks and ultimately preventing your own future. It seems like you should just go along and be a Team Player but trust me you're not.

Any of you interested in becoming more educated in these matters and protecting your collective bargaining rights feel free to contact your representative or possibly becoming a Steward yourself (because we never have enough eyes and ears in these small offices). After all, none of this is possible without us working together and being a Team Player.

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by  
Michael  
O'Hearn

# Unencumbered Employees

The term unencumbered employees in the clerk craft is much misunderstood. Many people use the words unencumbered and unassigned synonymously. This is not quite right. Unencumbered is a boarder term because it includes unassigned regular employees and full-time flexible employees. See Article 37. 4. A.

Also, I have heard people tell me that they have had unassigned clerks in their office for years. Something is wrong there. No one should be unassigned or unencumbered for years. If you look at Article 37. 4. D, you will see that it states, "When the number of full-time regular Clerk Craft duty assignments in an installation is less than the number of fulltime Clerks, a full-time employee remaining unencumbered for a period of 120 calendar days shall demonstrate the need to post the newly established full-time regular duty assignment in accordance with Article 37.3.A.1.a. This process shall continue until all unencumbered Clerks eligible to be assigned have successfully bid or been assigned to duty assignments." As you can see after 120 days of being an unencumbered employee, a job must be posted for bid. This will create a situation where either someone senior to the unencumbered employee will bid this job, or the unencumbered employee will be

the senior bidder, or no one will bid the job. If no one bids the job, the unencumbered employee will be assigned the job and they will no longer be unencumbered. If the unencumbered clerk is the senior bidder, they will get the job and they will no longer be unencumbered. If someone senior to the unencumbered employee bids this job, then that person's job will be posted for bid. Then, through the bidding cycle, eventually the unencumbered clerk will either be the successful bidder or be assigned a job. Thus, becoming an encumbered employee with a bid job and no longer being unencumbered. This process should not take years. If it does take years, there is a break down in the process that needs to be corrected.

Another misunderstood part of becoming unencumbered is the assignment of duty hours and days off. People will tell me that unencumbered or unassigned employees have no set hours and no set days off. This is not true. Article 37. 4. B. states, "An employee who becomes an unassigned regular will continue to work the same hours and scheduled days the employee worked immediately prior to becoming unassigned unless notified of a change in work schedule before expiration of the first 28 days after the date on which the employee became unassigned. Additional work schedule changes may be made, provided that such change cannot be made effective until 180 days after the effective

date of any previous change." You will notice that when an employee becomes unassigned they continue to work the same hours and days off as before. Then, in the first 28 days after becoming unencumbered, management may make a change in the unencumbered employees hours and day off. Once this change is made, the unencumbered employee will have a set schedule for 180 days. You will notice that the contract language above says "a change in work schedule". I interpret this to mean a single change, not multiple changes. Therefore, management cannot

make repeated changes in the first 28 days after an employee becomes unencumbered. Once they make a change that is it. No more changes until after 180 days. If you read the preceding paragraph carefully, you will notice that the unencumbered employee really should not be unencumbered much beyond 120 days. Therefore, they should not reach the 180 days of being unencumbered for a second change in their duty hours and days off. I hope this information will help you understand the rules and regulations for unencumbered clerks.

## Michigan Retiree Educational Assembly

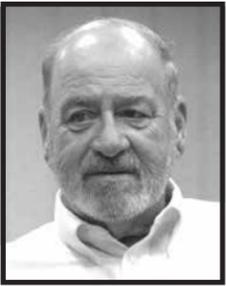
In conjunction with the MPWU Educational Assembly, we will be conducting an educational assembly for our retirees. Tentative classes include: Medicare/TSP/Elder law. We also hope to have a half day seminar with our national retiree director, Nancy Olumekor.

**SAVE THE DATES: MAY 24-26, 2017**  
Hilton Garden Inn • 26000 American Drive  
Southfield MI 48034  
(248) 357-1100

**Room Rate & Reservations: \$99 (plus taxes)** Mention that you are with Michigan Postal Workers Union to get the block rate. Rate includes one breakfast coupon voucher per room. Block rate good until May 1, 2017.

**Seminar Registration:** \$100 through April 30th (Early Registration) \$125 May 1st through the Assembly

Please make plans now to be part of this important meeting. State Retiree Chapter, sponsoring "Pizza For COPA" hospitality night; Thursday, May 25th, 7:00 p.m.



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

# Back To The Future

"Just because we're retired, we're NEVER out of the arena!"

**BOMBSHELL!** HR 756! If the above quote looks familiar, it should. I've preached it 20 years, or more. Well, Brothers and Sisters; it's here! That secure, untouchable retirement you were promised has been compromised. This is no longer an idle warning to pooh-pooh.

**Pay Attention!** HR 756 introduced by Committee Chairman Rep. Jason Chavetz R-UT, no friend of ours, co-sponsored by the entire House Committee including Dem Elijah Cummings, our proven friend. Endorsed by "some" commercial mailers, the USPS, and **ALL 4 postal Unions, including APWU!** Struck me as strange bedfellows. Puzzling! Not so much now as more information on HR 756 is rolled out. It's a concession. Medicare eligible retirees take a hit to varying degrees. An estimated 20% postal retirees age 65 and over did not enroll in Medicare for various reasons. Actually **forces** members into enrolling in Medicare under penalty of forfeiting their FEHBP coverage. Late enrollment penalty will be waived. Never mind the reason being penny-wise, or otherwise legitimate. This bill is a distasteful bailout of the USPS debt created by PAEA 2006 pre-funding mandate on retiree's backs to varying degrees, no matter what proponents spin. It's doomsday legislation, suggesting the alternative is far worse. Damned if we do, damned if we don't.

Initially, when HR 756 was rolled out by APWU, I questioned the NALC testifying in our behalf and the Medicare Part D component being foisted on retiree's FEHBP really got my attention. Don't mess with my health insurance coverage was my reaction. It's been explained that the Part D component will allow FEHBP the purchase of prescription drugs at the lower Medicare cost that "might" result in a lower premium. Fact is; postal workers and retirees will

be restricted to postal FEHBP plans. A **postal only** health insurance within FEHBP. HR 756 got an immediate response from NARFE urging members to contact their Congresspersons to vote "No". NARFE, a "Grand Alliance" coalition member. 39 questions were developed by retiree leadership from Michigan, to Wisconsin, developed and submitted by California State Retiree Chapter. APWU leadership promises to respond to those questions/issues, probably on the APWU website. Nothing as of this writing.

I had drafted this column to emphasize some of the more questionable aspects of the bill until absorbing reports of trusted Local and State leadership from the March 11-13 APWU National President's Conference. After being versed on the stark realities of HR 756, they went up on "The Hill" to lobby Members of Congress to support the legislation. The bill does a lot to preserve the USPS for future workers, according to returning presidents. That the bill isn't the APWU's desirable solution to the issues facing the USPS or this Union and its retirees. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD), our champion, convinced Rep. Chavetz R-UT, the bill's author, to submit it without a lot of the more regressive attacks on retirees, injured employees, as well as our collective bargaining rights.

Meeting with 12 Michigan House members and both Senators; the House Reps. said they will vote with Chavetz and Cummings. The message was clear that if it survives with no amendments that could kill it, the House will pass a "clean bill". It will then have to get through the Senate and a joint conference. Another president said they share concerns about Medicare, and none like the forced Medicare provision. APWU leadership convinced NPC participants that the USPS has maxed out their spending authority of \$15 Billion and in debt for the PAEA manufactured pre-funding of over \$33 Billion. They claim must be done. Previous attempts to get a bill out of Committee failed when we had more support in Congress. I quote; "This legislation, while not everything any one party wants, was a negotiation between Reps. Cummings and Chavetz and at the moment has the support of all interests." "The goal is to see a clean bill get through the House as amendments are the poison pills that keep killing any reform." Most disturbing were two additional observations: "We are truly in the weakest position I have ever experienced". And; "We will all be lucky to survive the next 2 years with any collective bargaining rights intact."

Pretty stark stuff. It's as if we've a gun to our heads with little choice but to comply despite making certain severe concessions affecting Medicare aged retirees. A Medicare Part D component to our **postal only** FEHBP health insur-

ance. Forcing Medicare eligible retirees into Medicare or lose their FEHBP coverage (unconscionable in my view), apparently needed to lift the USPS out of poverty!

In my considered opinion; it amounts to a bailout of the Postal Service on retiree's backs. I want any national officer to convince me otherwise! And don't give me that 'greater good' argument, or wrap a pretty bow on this. It's concessionary at best. All the so-called positive talking points of the bill; to waive the Medicare penalty for the 20% who didn't enroll in Medicare (Whoop-ee!), and several other "pluses" I'm sure you will read herein, in the national magazine, primarily just retaining what we have left.

Yup, we sure "did" have a secure, untouchable retirement and health care benefits promised us. We kept our end of the bargain with our years of service. No surprise. Look at our government's violation of treaties with Native American tribes. Are you convinced yet that what Union officers have been advocating from time immemorial; Whatever Congress giveth, Congress can taketh away." Or, "It can be taken away with the stroke of a pen."

I've covered more than enough to make it clear that HR 756 hinges on Medicare as the centerpiece. That it's borne by an estimated 76,000 postal retirees to varying degrees as described herein. That it's an absolute "must" if the USPS is to avoid financial collapse, according to State and Local presidents returning from the March 11-13 National President's Conference with stark resignation. Retiree Chapters and retiree field leadership being asked not to oppose HR 756. Internally, APWU retirees have been effectively voiceless. Therefore, if HR 756 is enacted; I fully expect APWU leadership at all levels to reciprocate to its retiree members for basically saving postal jobs! Delegates to the 2018 APWU National Convention put aside their prejudices over Retiree Involvement by adopting a Resolution providing proportionate Retiree Chapter delegate REPRESENTATION in Convention. Where would they be in this financial crisis if it weren't for senior retiree's Medicare to bail them out?! We're owed Big Time!

**YOUNG MEMBER COMMITTEE (YMC):** A ray of hope for the future of the APWU. Through interaction with YMC Central Region Rep., Joshua Gray, it comes to light that many, if not most new and young members ARE NOT RECEIVING THE "Michigan Messenger"! Local Unions MUST update and provide the Editor their membership mailing list! Communications are critical beyond the hand-held variety! Share your "Messenger" with an APWU co-worker. After reading front to back; leave your copy in the swing/break room. Thanks to the

YMC the Editor and President have been alerted to this issue.

I was privileged to have been included and accepted in an YMC telecom. Retirees and young leadership have more in common than not. Impressive was their willingness to listen and ask questions. Feeling genuinely accepted, I was careful to stay inbounds. I was, and am equally interested in learning the YMC agenda in order to work in concert, avoiding stepping each other. Regional YMC members report directly to their Coordinator. They quickly recognized pitfalls retiree leadership have experienced along our way. I look forward to cultivating this promising, exciting coalition between young and old (senior, if you will) to ensure the future health of Locals across APWU to all our benefit.

## AL'S SHORTS:

**DID S.S. SENIORS NOTICE:** Medicare premiums are no longer \$104.90? As a result of the anemic .03 percent COLA, increases to monthly premiums are all different by a few bucks & cents.

**JAN. 21ST MILLION WOMEN'S MARCH:** Whether in D.C. or Hometown, USA; God Bless the pink-hatted Sisters (and some Brothers) who participated in large part in protest of the new occupier of the White House.

**WELCOME:** Dave Campbell, newly elected President of the "Dave Lenard" 480-481 Area Local Retiree Chapter, succeeding Paul Felton. (\*\*) It's important that Local Chapters furnish the State Retiree Chapter president updated contact information lists of Local Chapter officers when there's an election, or other changes.

**EDUCATION ASSEMBLY:** May 24-26 Retiree class agenda forthcoming. "Pizza For COPA" hospitality Thursday, May 25th. Enjoy a slice or two, salad & breadsticks with your favorite beverage, enjoy fellowship and don't forget to hit the COPA jug HARD with your \$\$bucks! Bon appetite!

**PUT THOSE OREO'S BACK!** Check the back of ALL Nabisco products, especially Oreo's! If it says; MM or Mexico, put it back on the shelf. Put the bite on Nabisco for abandoning 600 American workers in their Chicago plant to exploit low-waged Mexican workers.

**WHERE OH WHERE?** At this writing, with nearly one-fourth of 2017 behind us, still no membership card, or is it just me? Inquiry to the Retirees' Dept. response was; they're coming. Uncertain if this is to be critical or concerning, but where is our Director with regard to HR 756? Since retirees are at the crux of this landmark proposed legislation, one would expect their Director to be front and center.

Solidarity Forever!

**DEADLINE**  
The deadline for  
articles for the  
May-June  
issue of the  
*Michigan Messenger*  
is June 3rd, 2017

VETERANS' DIRECTOR

# Veterans' News



by  
**John P.  
Smeekens**

### V.A. AND INFERTILITY

VA is now authorized to provide fertility counseling and treatment using assisted reproductive technologies, including in vitro fertilization (IVF), to veterans with service-connected disabilities that resulted in the inability to procreate without the use of such treatments. Recently the VA announced that it will begin providing IVF treatments for eligible veterans and their spouses. Veterans with service-related infertility who wish to explore IVF options should schedule an appointment with their local VA health care facility for eligibility determinations, clinical evaluation and consultation. The law also authorizes VA to reimburse veterans for the cost of adoption, but VA has not announced when it will begin adoption reimbursements.

### TAX CREDIT FOR DAV RENTERS

Introduced by Rep. Henry Yanez (D) on January 26, 2017 this Bill will authorize a tax credit for disabled veterans who are renters equal to 20 percent of their rent, up to the amount of property taxes levied on the property. It's House Bill 4111. Contact your representatives and ask them to support this bill.

### BUDDY-TO-BUDDY VETERANS' PROGRAM

The Buddy-to-Buddy Program is a peer-to-peer outreach program that provides peer support and connection to resources for Michigan Post-9/11 service members and veterans. The program places Volunteer Veterans at MIARNG armories to offer resource linkage to current service members as well as places them in the community to help any veteran in need. Volunteers are trained to help veterans find resources for a variety of concerns, such as: financial, VA benefits, education, emotional challenges, substance abuse, legal, medical, or employment. This service is completely free and confidential. The program is part of the M-SPAN suite of programs serving military service members, Veterans, and their families, funded by the Welcome Back Veterans initiative. For more information on volunteering or getting assistance from the program, visit [www.buddytobuddy.org](http://www.buddytobuddy.org), call 1-888-82-BUDDY (28339), or email [buddytobuddyvvp@umich.edu](mailto:buddytobuddyvvp@umich.edu).

### HOME FRONT STRONG

Home Front Strong is the sister program of Buddy-to-Buddy, and is designed just for spouses or partners of Post-9/11 service members and veterans. During a group course, Home Front Strong helps participants build positive coping strategies and connect with other military and veteran families. The group includes a free meal, and a program, available online, through a secure website. For more information,

email Rebecca Couch at [rligon@umich.edu](mailto:rligon@umich.edu) or call (734) 998-2206.

### VA MORTGAGE RATES

VA-loan-eligible homeowners have access to lower rates than do non-Veterans. VA rates are 0.38% lower on average than standard loan rates. The current average VA loan is issued at just 3.76%, compared to well over 4% for conventional loans. Luckily Veterans have access to an accelerated refinance program call the IRRRL, or Interest Rate Reduction Refinancing Loan. Also, known as the VA streamline, this is a VA-to-VA loan meant to lower the barriers to refinancing. It's quick, requires no appraisal, and no pay stubs or bank statements. Even Veterans with "banged up" credit can get an IRRRL.

Don't have a VA loan? No problem. The standard VA refinance can replace any loan type. Use it to eliminate mortgage insurance, pay off a non-VA loan, or get cash out. No matter which avenue you choose, the process is quick and can get you into a sub-4% rate before rates rise above those levels forever. Contact your financial institution for more information!

### PTSD DO YOU HAVE IT???

If you have experienced a traumatic event and are having symptoms you might be wondering whether you have PTSD. **Talk to your doctor if you think you have PTSD.**

Since many common reactions after trauma look like the symptoms of PTSD, a mental health provider must decide if you have PTSD. Providers who have been trained to understand the thoughts and behaviors that go along with PTSD are best able to make that decision. A provider must use his or her training and judgment to select the best test or set of questions to use. Then he or she must interpret the results of the test. The American Psychological Association suggests that only trained profession-

als give tests to assess for PTSD. If you think you may have PTSD, talk to your doctor or a mental health provider. **AND REMEMBER; #1-All VA Medical Centers** and many VA clinics provide PTSD care. #2-Some VA centers have specialty programs for PTSD. #3-Use the **VA PTSD Program Locator** to find a VA PTSD program. #4-Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling to Veterans **and their families** after war. #5-Find a **Vet Center** near you.

Or just go on line to the Local VA website and check out what they have to offer.

### LOWERING OF SOME CO-PAYMENTS

There's good news for many Veterans receiving prescriptions from VA. As of February 27, 2017, the regulations for copayments will change. The cost to most Veterans for medications required on an outpatient basis to treat non-service connected conditions will be less. Most Veterans will see a \$1 to \$4 savings per prescription filled. Some Veterans may see a small (\$2 to \$3) increase for brand name (called "Tier 3") outpatient medications. Additionally, Veterans in priority groups 2 - 6 will see a decrease in their annual copayment cap of \$960 go down to \$700 a year while Veterans in priority groups 7 and 8, who currently don't have an annual cap, will see a \$700 cap per year as well.

### VETERANS' LONG TERM CARE

Michigan's veterans will be ensured safe and quality long-term care under legislation recently signed by Gov. Rick Snyder. Senate Bill 1100, sponsored by state Sen. Dave Hildenbrand, creates the Michigan Veterans' Facility Authority, a semi-autonomous state authority within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. It is now Public Act 560 of 2016. The nine-member authority will include the director of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, or his designee, and eight members appointed

by the governor for four-year terms. It will be able to solicit funds and issue bonds for the purpose of purchasing or leasing land and facilities to construct new veterans' homes or renovate existing facilities. The authority also will be responsible for administering any veterans' homes built or acquired, ensuring that the state's veteran facilities are incorporating industry best practices, which will lead to higher quality long-term care for Michigan's veterans. The Grand Rapids and D.J. Jacobetti Homes for Veterans would remain under the authority of the Board of Managers established under the Michigan Veterans' Facility Act, unless the Board relinquishes control to the Authority.

Plans include new VETERANS' facilities in Grand Rapids and Detroit as early as 2019.

### I AM NOT POLITICAL, BUT!!!

Is it True? Or is it False? **Does anyone know for sure?** I'm talking about the President's Joint Session of Congress speech, held on Tuesday Night February 28, 2017. Especially when he acknowledged the GOLD STAR WIFE of Navy SEAL William "Ryan" Owens, who was killed in action in Yemen

As a Military VETERAN, I'm Mad as Hell after hearing, and reading, numerous reports that some politicians, by their actions, showed NO RESPECT to Gold Star Wife Carryn Owens. If you want to sit on your ass when POTUS is talking about foreign policy, an immigration stance, or some other program, or Individual, that you don't like or agree with, go ahead, SIT. But when the Commander in Chief, of this great nation, is honoring a fallen Soldier, who **GAVE HIS LIFE** to defend your freedoms, get OFF YOUR ASS and STAND, despite your malicious feelings towards POTUS. Remember **YOU REPRESENT THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!!!**

## Two Days On The Hill

*continued from page 2*

Behind the memorial is a wall and inscribed on that wall are numerous quotes from Dr. King. Among those I have always found inspiration in were the following words he said on December 10, 1964 in Oslo Norway:

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits."

Looking at our nation today I find that

Dr. King's spirit and his leadership are still needed today and I believe they still thrive today in the acts and leadership of Reverend Dr. William Barber and others like him.

I believe we must fight for civil rights and be certain they extend to all segments of our society. I will close with one additional quote from Dr. King from a speech he gave in Washington D.C. in April 1959:

"Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."

In Solidarity,



Roscoe Woods and Mike Mize meeting with a Michigan Congressional Staffer.  
*Photo by Amy Puhalski, President WMAL*

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by James Stevenson

# A 'Cease And Desist' Is Far More Valuable Than A Money Settlement

Many of us have lost our way. Rather than fight to end the contract violation we have begun to simply accept money for contract violations without ever addressing the underlying contract violation. Receiving money is always nice but at what point in time do we demand compliance with the contract.

I have seen many grievances in which the union is not even requesting a "cease and desist" all they are asking for is to be compensated. We should always request a "cease and desist" as part of our remedy. Most monetary settlements are simply that "a monetary settlement." The monetary settlement will have very little effect on curbing the violation unless it is a significant amount.

Some people go back and say, "Oh, look at me I got everybody paid \$250 for carriers and supervisors performing clerk work." What you do not realize is that management has al-

ready calculated out that it is cheaper to throw a few crumbs at the union and keep violating the contract versus properly staffing the operation with a clerk. When we as union officials have given up on fighting the violation we are now perpetuating the problem.

An extremely intelligent union member stated to me once "Well, our people like getting the money." Keeping the membership satisfied is extremely important but our primary job is enforcing the provisions and rights under the contract. If that means receiving monetary remuneration so be it, but we should not be relegated to just obtaining money thus telling management "It is Okay for you to violate the contract as long as you pay us for it."

Think of all the times management has agreed to pay for crossing-craft violations, for working one person on the DCBS, for using PSEs over eight hours prior to maximizing the OTDL, supervisors performing clerk work, etc. The reason that management does this is because it is cheaper to

pay the grievance than it is to properly staff the operation by hiring a "full-time career" clerk.

I am not saying that is improper to have monetary settlements, what I am saying is that if your office is experiencing repeated (especially long-term) violations than the focus should be on stopping the contract violation. A "cease and desist" goes a long way in achieving that. Often times a monetary settlement will read "Solely to resolve the USPS will pay..." Most settlements are neither precedent setting or citable. A cease and desist on the other hand can be utilized to prevent further (future) violations and brings the employer in line with the contract.

Some say "Oh, management will sign those and keep right on violating." OK. I get that and understand that but a "cease and desist" is a "living" document that at some point in time must come into compliance it just depends on how far we are willing to take that non-compliance issue.

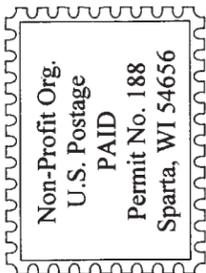
Another avenue is to start writing your contract settlements similar to the way that management writes discipline settlements. Management loves to include language in a discipline settlement that often reads "... the letter of warning for attendance will be rescinded provided no same or similar violations within the next 6 months." The reason that management always includes this boilerplate language is because they are preserving their right to come back after the employee if they do not comply with the settlement.

In our contract settlements we should start including boilerplate language which preserves our right to come back after management if they do not comply with the settlement. Something to this effect "Should management violate the settlement within the next 6 months the grievance shall be reinstated at the same point at which it was settled with no claims of timeliness." Hey, if management is sincere when signing the settlement they should have no problem with the same 6 month language they use with us.

Management uses the language so that they can pick back up on the discipline where they left off without having to start all over again. Ask yourself, "Why are we always starting the same grievance over and over again?" It is simple. Management has realized that often times a little "hush money" will quiet the employees down until the next payment.

Suppose you have an employee improperly working in another office repeatedly or for an extended period of time. Management says, "Ok, you got us. Here is \$500 now go away." The more significant issue is that in all likelihood a new position needs to be created in that office or a vacant position needs to be filled.

Remember, creating desirable full-time duty assignments and job security should be our first priority. Do not become content with just receiving compensation for a continuing violation. The job you save may very well be your own.



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

