

Michigan MESSSENGER



Volume 48, Number 200
March-April, 2019

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

In This Edition

Show Me The Money.....	2
Leadership – Starts At The Top!.....	3
Veterans News	4
Know Your Rights!!.....	5
Be A Buddy Not A Bully.....	5
Retiree Chapter Education.....	6
Grievant And Witness Statements.....	6
A View From The Mitt	7
The Forgotten Tool And An Under Utilized Defense	8

PRESIDENT

Need The Union?



by
**Michael
Mize**

Let me explain a little on why we all need the Union and why everyone needs to be a member. I want to start by reminding everyone that receives this paper what Management thinks we are worth. They have clearly identified their opinion of us in the offer that was presented at the negotiations table.

We all work hard to make sure the Service that the American people deserve is delivered. The Postal Service believes the employees should have another wage freeze. Management also wants to change annual pay raises and COLA's to lump sum payments. Lump sum payments will not change your pay rate for the future. It will not reflect in the

over time hours that we are forced to work as Management has short staffed so many operations. To add to the insult, they would also have no effect on your retirement as your base pay would not change. This is terrible for working people.

Management also wants to increase the percentage of non-career employees in every craft. We gave Management the non-career workforce to allow them flexibility. Then Management eliminated jobs which eliminated the flexibility. Now they want more flexibility. There is no reason that Management needs this other than to repair their failure to do their job correctly. They need to properly staff, that is in my opinion the only real job they must do. Frankly they have been failing miserably.

Benefits to future career employees to be cut even further. We all know that

tiered wage systems do not work. Every employee that puts in the time deserves a fair wage and new employees are no different.

Management wants to eliminate all the existing Local Memorandums of Understanding. They want to eliminate on the clock union steward time. These are both extremely harmful to us as bargaining unit employees. Unions have worked for years to create the Local Memos we have. If they were all eliminated, we would be starting from scratch. Vacation agreements would be gone, holiday agreements would be gone, etc... Union time for the most part would not be necessary if Management would follow the Contract that they have agreed to.

These are just some of the highlights of Managements Final Economic Proposal. Now I know it is not the Manager

in your office that probably feels this way. But Management feels this way at the top levels. They obviously have a very low opinion of us as bargaining unit employees. I can only state that I will be letting all of them know that I do not appreciate the position that their upper Management has taken. I will let them all know that upper Management has in fact insulted us all and that it is unacceptable.

I would ask that every member take a close look at what Management would give you if the Union wasn't here. We are the Union and we need you, your coworker and everyone that can be a member to be members and get in the fight. If we don't, we may all end up working for much less and paying the price. Remind every employee of the facts above. Without our Unity we are weak, with it we are strong.

In Unity.

Working For The Membership

We just returned from the Legislative Presidents Conference in Washington DC. During the time we were there the Michigan group met with all but one of the representatives or their aides. This means that we had meetings with two Senators and thirteen of the fourteen House Representatives. The one that we were unable to obtain a meeting with, Representative Amash, we will continue to try to get a meeting with.

Our discussions revolved mostly around privatization of the Postal Service. On a very positive note, our meetings all were positive. Both parties were receptive

to our information. This gives lead to possible bipartisan legislation that could correct the problems the Postal Service has suffered for over a dozen years. Most of our Legislators in Michigan have a very clear understanding that the rural areas will suffer more if the Service were privatized. They do not want to see or have problems contacting their constituents.

We must keep the positive flow of information to the Legislators and the public going. That is why there will be some informational actions taking place on Tax Day. Keep an eye open for the Union Locals doing

something on April 15. If you can help, I'm certain the Locals will let the small office and small Locals lend a hand.

Just remember, we use no tax dollars to operate, we deliver to 157 million addresses 6 days per week. We deliver 30% of fed ex and 40% of Amazon mail. We do a better job than they can do. We also do this job as a service to the American people, not to make a profit and for a universal price.

In Unity. Mike Maze.



LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Show Me The Money



by Roscoe Woods

The battle to carve up the USPS may be stalled with the Dems 2018 move to retake the House but it will be visited again as the new Congress moves forward. As well there is legislation in the works that will end these attacks hopefully once and for all. Opposing forces will come to bare as we move through this Congressional Term.

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A quote:

There are major efforts being made to dismantle Social Security, the public schools, the post office – anything that benefits the population has to be dismantled. Efforts against the U.S. Postal Service are particularly surreal.

– Noam Chomsky

Groups like the Heritage Foundation and their mega rich donors have their eye on us and it's not because they have this deep seated belief they can provide better customer service, nope, they believe they can privatize us, reduce customer service and line the pockets of corporation\$ who would take us over.

It is all about the Benjamin\$

The APWU National web-site at www.apwu.org characterizes the current state of play regarding privatization:

“Many on Wall Street and in Congress are eager to dismantle the Postal Service so they can turn over the profitable pieces to their cronies in private industry. And they are willing to undermine universal service to the American people to make it happen.

Unfortunately, the top leadership of the USPS has aided and abetted the privatization efforts. Examples abound:

- USPS management has proposed wholesale subcontracting of Motor Vehicle Services;
• Postal managers continually seek to outsource Maintenance Crafts duties and Support Services functions.
• The USPS closed 140 mail processing centers in 2012. Although there is a moratorium on consolidations, they end very soon, in April 2017.

Postal management lowered service standards in 2012 and 2015 – virtually eliminating overnight delivery of first-class mail and periodicals and slowing down mail delivery on all classes of mail throughout the country.
• APWU activists and allies put an end to the deal between the Postal Service and Staples, but post offices are still constantly threatened by Approved Shipper Programs, which outsource postal work into private retailers.

Privatization of postal service doesn't just hurt postal families; it thwarts a constitutional right that is guaranteed for all Americans: A public Postal Service.

The Postal Service justifies many of its service-cutting policies by claiming it is suffering multi-billion-dollar losses.

But the USPS, which doesn't use a dime of taxpayer money, is profitable. In fiscal years 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016; the USPS earned profits from its operations. The red ink stems from Congress, which requires the Postal Service to pre-fund future retiree health benefits – something no other public agency or private firm is required to do. That costs the Postal Service \$5.6 billion a year – and that's the red ink.

The American Postal Workers Union isn't taking the assault lying down. The union is constantly fighting for a vibrant, public Postal Service for generations to come.”

We need to remain too vigilant since any moves to cut us apart will more than likely at first destroy service in our rural areas. Small town post offices tend to be less profitable and as such most likely would be first to go. There are thousands of hard working clerks and carriers in our rural offices, these folks are vital parts of their communities and

besides the personal cost of job loss to our sisters and brothers the impact to the communities they live in would be detrimental as well.

When you stop and think about it given our success at negotiating a living wage the hard working women and men of the USPS are vital to the overall health of our national and local economies. If a 35 day government shut down could cost overall around \$11,000,000,000 (according to Forbes magazine) to the national economy imagine the hit it would take if hundreds of thousands of us had some corporation unilaterally reduce our wages and cut our benefits?

Make no mistake, the first pillar to go if the forces arrayed are successful at privatization in our rights to collectively bargain.

A Constitutional mandate to provide universal service to the entire nation including Guam and Puerto Rico is no easy task yet we do it daily despite the forces arrayed against us. I believe we could show a profit if postal management wasn't so inept but hey, the obvious is what it is. Whether it's greedy corporations or incompetent management the hard working Clerks, Carriers, Maintenance and MVS employees get it done 24/7/365.

On the good news for the USPS side of things Michigan's own Senator Peters will holding a series of round table discussions with postal workers and other interested parties as he begins crafting his legislation that will end once and for all the attempts to privatize our service.

Senator Peters is beginning these roundtables on February 20th, 2019 in Bloomfield Hills MI and they have invited all Postal Union leadership to attend. Hopefully this is the beginning of the end of postal privatization.

All of us here in Michigan need to support Senator Peters efforts and In encourage you to all his office and thank him for this endeavor. Senator Gary Peters can be reached at: (202) 224-6221, give him a call, let him know we all support this legislation.

Closing quote:

At a time when the Post Office is losing substantial revenue from the instantaneous flow of information by email and on the Internet, slowing mail service is a recipe for disaster.

– Senator Bernie Sanders

In Solidarity.



- 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 Ron Krumrie
C: (231) 409-4609
e-Mail: olcubman@aol.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 Wendy Kempke
W: (517) 263-5809; C: (419) 377-4595
e-Mail: kempke.wk@gmail.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) Patrick Jones
U: (248) 543-3262; C: (313) 720-6092
F: (248) 543-2750
e-Mail: patjones7752@gmail.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) Sandra Rancour
W: (810) 742-1580; U: (810) 239-0931
e-Mail: fmalccd@comcast.net
Area 5 Director (486/487) Tom Kindell
C: (989) 418-6061
e-Mail: tkindellapwu@gmail.com
Area 6 Director (488/489) Joshua Gray
W: (616) 977-1050; C: (616) 822-5627
F: (616) 977-1020
e-Mail: apwusteward281@gmail.com
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) Lisa Borchardt
W/U: (616) 776-1489; C: (616) 706-1005
e-Mail: lisa.borchardt@gmail.com
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 Vacant
C: (989) 213-3068
e-Mail: hystreet@att.net

The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:
Battle Creek 480-481 Jackson Stevensville
Central MI 486-487 Ludington Traverse City
Cheboygan 498-499 Muskegon Troy Local
Detroit District Gaylord Roger City Western MI
Farmington Great Lakes Area Sault Ste Marie
Flint Mail Haulers Southwest MI

The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.
The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Articles and correspondence to the Editor may be sent to MPWU – Michigan Messenger, John Greathouse – Editor, PO Box 27303, Lansing, MI 48909-7303. Articles must be signed to be printed (your name may be withheld upon request). Articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.



EDITOR



by John Greathouse

LEADERSHIP – Starts At The Top!

I have been seeing several posts coming through on Facebook about what happened with our contract negotiations. All of the stories come back to show me that I am seeing fracturing between the National Leadership and the Members that must be addressed and healed quickly before management is able to exploit it and tear us down farther.

As much of my leadership perspective is drawn from my experience in the military. When I had my first leadership role as a commander, I learned firsthand that people will do best at what they “want to do” and not what they “need to do.” People will operate best from knowing “why” they do what they do, and not just “what” they need to do.

Having an effective leader in place to assist people with visualizing the end goal is the key that enable me to lay this vision out for my team.

Below, there are shown the six essential traits of a Leader that can guide them on their quest, but in our case, there seems to be a disconnect of these between our National Leaders and the members.

In order for the APWU to be successful, they need to embrace these key elements.

1. Teamwork
2. Dedication
3. Accountability
4. System-oriented
5. Drive
6. Higher purpose

The needs of my team come before my own, it is this kind of culture that builds camaraderie, tenacity and drive as these qualities are necessary for us to not only survive, but to thrive.

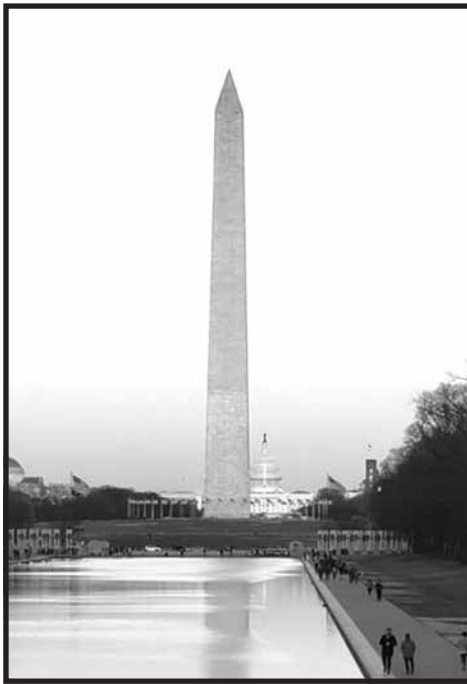
Strong leadership cannot happen if trust is broken with the people who are following and will result in a collapse of whatever mission that you laid out! I also learned people need to see and visualize the end game in order to walk the lengthy path, and laying a vision is critical.

After writing this part of my article, I paid a visit to the Google gods and took a look at what was presented and picked pieces & part of the posts for the following, as I also felt they presented additional traits of a good

leader that should be followed, the best part is these came with wonderful examples.

Integrity is the integration of outward actions and inner values. A person of integrity is the same on the outside and on the inside. Such an individual can be trusted because he or she never veers from inner values, even when it might be expeditious to do so. A leader must have the trust of followers and therefore must display integrity.

Dedication means spending whatever time or energy is necessary to accomplish the task at hand. A leader inspires dedication by example, doing whatever it takes to complete the next step toward the vision. By setting an excellent example, leaders can show followers that there are no nine-to-five jobs on the team, only opportunities to achieve something great.



Magnanimity means giving credit where it is due. A magnanimous leader ensures that credit for successes is spread as widely as possible throughout the company. Conversely, a good leader takes personal responsibility for failures. This sort of reverse magnanimity that helps other people feel good about themselves and draws the team closer together. To spread the fame and take the blame is a hallmark of effective leadership.

Leaders with **humility** recognize that they are no better or worse than other members of the team. A humble leader is not self-effacing but rather tries to elevate everyone. Leaders with humility also understand that their status does not make them a god. Mahatma Gandhi is a role model for Indian leaders, and he pursued a

“follower-centric” leadership role.

Openness means being able to listen to new ideas, even if they do not conform to the usual way of thinking. Good leaders are able to suspend judgment while listening to others’ ideas, as well as accept new ways of doing things that someone else thought of. Openness builds mutual respect and trust between leaders and followers, and it also keeps the team well supplied with new ideas that can further its vision.

Creativity is the ability to think differently, to get outside of the box that constrains solutions. Creativity gives leaders the ability to see things that others have not seen and thus lead followers in new directions. The most important question that a leader can ask is, “What if ...?” Possibly the worst thing a leader can say is, “I know this is a dumb question ...”

Fairness means dealing with others consistently and justly. A leader must check all the facts and hear everyone out before passing judgment. He or she must avoid leaping to conclusions based on incomplete evidence. When people feel they that are being treated fairly, they reward

continued on page 5

Great Loss



Gary VanHoogstraten

Back in September the MPWU and society lost a great man. Many may not know him as he was retired for several years, but those that have been around for some time will remember him. I’m writing this article to pay tribute to past MPWU President, Gary VanHoogstraten.

Gary dedicated his life to serving and helping others. He served in Germany for the 3rd Armored Division and was honorably discharged in 1969. He then worked for the City of Bay City where he had been born and raised. He became a Postal employee in 1975. Gary still had the drive to serve as he became a Union steward in the Bay City Post Office and eventually served as the local President. Gary saw the merger of the Bay City Local with the Saginaw Area Local and then served as the Vice President. Gary also served as the Saginaw Retiree Chapter President.

Brother Gary’s involvement with the MPWU also continued to prove his desire to serve this great Union and its membership. Gary was an Area Director for one of the

largest Areas we have. Moved on to be the Director of Research and Education, helping to make sure all of our representatives were trained well. He served as the Executive Secretary and as the President of the MPWU. Even after retiring and stepping down from the President’s position he stayed involved by being an MPWU Advisor. It is a huge benefit to new Presidents having someone to contact and ask questions. That included this President as I spoke to Gary last Spring before our Convention. Gary assisted every APWU represented employee with the work he did. That work will continue to matter for years to come as it helped make us what we are today.

Gary was a very wise Union man with a heart of gold that bled Union Labor. Gary was born 1/31/48 in Bay City, MI and lived there his entire life except for his time in the Service. Gary passed on 9/25/18 at the age of 70. This was far too early and way too young for our Brother to pass. Gary is and will be missed. We thank Brother Gary for all he did and can only add, Rest in Peace Brother.

VETERANS' DIRECTOR



by
John P.
Smeekens

Veteran News

Hey Marines Listen Up

The Marine Corps encourages all those who lived or worked at Camp Lejeune in 1987 or before to register to receive notifications regarding Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water. Go to clwater@usmc.mil in your search engine to get more information and to register!!!

VA Benefits For Veterans

Are you interested in finding out which VA benefits you may qualify for? Start with the VA Benefits Navigator tool. By answering a series of questions related to your service, you'll learn which VA benefits you may be eligible to receive. **It takes less than 20 minutes and all information you enter is secure.** VA benefits may help you buy a **home**, earn a **degree**, start a **career**, stay **healthy** and do so much more. Visit Explore.VA.gov and click the red "Get Started" button to begin.

Burn Pit Legislation

Recently Representatives Tulsi Gabbard and Brian Mast, along with Senators Amy Klobuchar and Dan Sullivan, introduced the **Burn Pit Accountability Act** to help add service members and Veterans to the burn pit registry. The bipartisan bill would improve how DOD and VA track, treat, and prevent the harmful impacts of burn pits. The Burn Pits Accountability Act would evaluate the exposure of U.S. service members and Veterans to open burn pits and toxic airborne chemicals by: **#1 – Requiring** the Secretary of Defense to record whether service members have been based or stationed at a location where an open burn pit was used or exposed to toxic airborne chemicals, including any information recorded as part of the **Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry**, in the Periodic Health Assessment (PHAs), Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPEs), and Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHAs). **#2 – Enrolling** any service member who meets the above criteria in the **Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry**, unless he or she opts-out. **#3 – Requiring** the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to share information relating to exposure of burn pits and toxic airborne chemicals recorded in PHAs, SHPEs, and PDHAs.

VA Fisher House For Michigan

Recently the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that Fisher House Foundation plans to construct a new 16-suite Fisher Houses at the VA campus in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which will provide temporary

accommodations for the families and caregivers of Veterans and active-duty military receiving care at the Ann Arbor VA facility. To date, the Fisher House Foundation has built and donated 38 Fisher Houses to the VA. Construction of a typical Fisher House takes approximately 12 to 15 months. Once the home is completed and ownership is transferred over to VA, the Fisher House becomes a federal building that is operated, maintained and staffed by the department. The VA Fisher Houses will support access to care for thousands of additional Veterans traveling to VA facilities for treatment. In 2018, VA Fisher Houses accommodated over 28,000 families, saving guests more than \$18 million in lodging expenses. The Fisher House program currently has 80 homes at VA and Department of Defense hospitals. Over the next several years, it anticipates expanding from 38 to at least 64 VA Fisher Houses.

Ramp Program Ends

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced it will discontinue the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP), which provided eligible Veterans with early resolutions to their appealed claims, ahead of full implementation of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 that took effect on February 19, 2019. Beginning on this date, Veterans who appeal a VA decision will have three decision review choices: **Higher-Level Review**, **Supplemental Claim**, and appeal to the **Board of Veterans' Appeals**. The VA will now offer Veterans greater choice in how the VA reviews their claim, while ensuring it is committed that the claims process is accurate, timely and fair. For more information on Appeals Modernization, visit one of the following <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/appeals.asp> and <https://>

by Sandy Rancour

The Christmas rush is over, but that doesn't mean we can relax on how the post shipments are arriving to our stations.

We still have the height limits (6 feet) and we must hold these trucking companies accountable to follow our safety rules we have in place, if not only protect us, but the customer's mail and our office doors and docks.

Recently at my post office a contractor for Fed Ex backed his truck onto our scissor lift dock, got stuck and proceeded to haul the lift out into

www.bva.va.gov/.

Tax Free Shopping

I know I've said this before but, Honorably discharged Veterans can shop tax-free for life at **ShopMyExchange.com**. This online benefit began on Veterans Day 2017, and since then Veterans have saved more than \$4.5 million in sales tax. Determine your eligibility and start shopping today at **ShopMyExchange.com/veterans**.

Veteran Dental Help

Michigan Community Dental Clinics (MCDCC) now has a new fee scale for uninsured veterans that is a standard 30% discount from their standard rates. The only items needed to qualify are proof of veteran status (Form DD-214 or valid veteran ID card), and the patient must be without dental insurance. There are no income guidelines for this plan.

Defective Earplugs

Between 2003 and 2015 3M's Dual-Ended Combat Arms Earplug were given to thousands of men and women in the armed services, without knowing their defects! This put the men and women who fight to protect us at risk for permanent hearing loss, damage, or impairment. The 3M lawsuit includes a complaint that 3M and the big businesses involved with this endangerment of our Troops – manipulated the test results of the earplugs to meet the U.S. government's required product standards! These big wigs willingly put our troops at risk of tinnitus and more, for a few dollars! Go to the following site for more info: www.earplug-recallinjury-check.com.

Court Of Appeals On Agent Orange

On January 29, in a 9-2 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the

Federal Circuit ruled in favor of the veteran in *Alfred Procopio, Jr., v. Robert Wilkie*, finding the intent of Congress in the *Agent Orange Act of 1991* was to extend benefits to *all* veterans who served within the territorial waters of Vietnam, 12 nautical miles from shore. The VA has 90 days from the Court's ruling to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court; and VA Secretary Wilkie has yet to announce how the VA plans to respond. In the meantime, VVA recommends those veterans who think they may have served on a vessel in Vietnam's territorial waters reach out to their local Veterans Service Officer to file **VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim**. If VVA is your representative, please go to **Service Officer Locator** on www.vva.org to find your local representative. If you do not wish to work with a service officer, you may fill out the VA Form 21-0966 form and submit it to the VA. It is recommended that Blue Water Navy veterans submit the VA Form 21-0966 if they have never filed an Agent Orange claim or if they have been denied an Agent Orange claim. **If you are a spouse of a Blue Water Navy veteran who died from an Agent Orange-related illness, we recommend you also file a VA Form 21-0966.** Talk to a V.S.O.

VA Appointment App

Veterans' enrolled in VA health care can now schedule medical appointments through the new VA Video Connect app. Instead of a standard in-person medical appointment, the new App provides a video connection for Veterans through a Smartphone, computer or tablet. The App aims to give direct access to health care. The VA says Video Connect has already helped thousands of Veterans receive services while reducing their travel and wait times!

AREA 4 DIRECTOR

Safety And Amazon

the parking lot! He said he was trying to pull his truck off the lift! These contractors are in such a hurry they combine pallets to save time, which if too high, is a safety hazard to us.

Let your supervisor know if the pallet is too high or the contractor is abusing our docks and doors. If a supervisor is not available, I suggest writing up a health and safety form and present to your supervisor when they arrive. At my particular office the supervisor instructed a truck driver he needed to break down a pallet that was too high, and he complained he didn't have time for this mess, but he did do it, and the next day, the pallets

were at the safe required height.

It doesn't take very long to make sure we receive our mail properly, and by doing so we can protect ourselves and our co-workers from being seriously hurt.

In unity.

DEADLINE

for articles for the next issue of the *Michigan Messenger* is May 11, 2019

AREA 6 DIRECTOR



by
Joshua
Gray

Know Your Rights!!!

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I want to be sure every person in my Area, and every person who is a member of the APWU is aware of what your Weingarten Rights are, in as clear and concise way possible. During an investigatory interview, the Supreme Court ruled that the following rules apply:

Rule 1: The **employee** must make a clear request for union representation before or during the interview. The employee cannot be punished for making this request.

Rule 2: After the employee makes the request, the employer must choose from among three options:

A). Grant the request and delay questioning until the union representa-

tive arrives and (prior to the interview continuing) the representative has a chance to consult privately with the employee;

B). Deny the request and end the interview immediately; or

C). Give the employee a clear choice between having the interview without representation, or ending the interview.

Rule 3: If the employer denies the request for union representation, and continues to ask questions, it commits an unfair labor practice and the employee has a right to refuse to answer. The employer may not discipline the employee for such a refusal.

Now I realize that since you do not have a steward 'readily available' due to needing to reach out via telephone, that you're Postmaster or Supervisor may try to make you believe these rights do not apply to you. I assure you that this is not the case. YOU as the

employee need to assert your rights to request a steward. The management official has the above 3 options. If management insists on continuing the interview I advise that you either remain silent, or if you choose to continue the interview that you take notes.

The notes you should be looking to take would include would be: word for word the question asked, which you should be verifying you get the question word for word. You also need to be sure that you write the entirety of your answer to said question. Remember that you should NOT lie to management during the course of the interview, whether your steward is present or not. There is no timeline that you need to complete this interview by, especially if management is not honoring your Weingarten Rights. The longer you take the more likely they will be to honor your request next time. Do NOT allow management to get a copy of your notes. They are your notes and management has no right to them.

As soon as the interview has concluded you need to request a steward again, and every 2 hours for the rest of the day and the next day and the next day until management provides you the steward you are entitled to. Management is responsible for finding your steward and contacting them. It is NOT the employee's responsibility to contact the steward, and further you are entitled to time **on the clock** to consult your steward.

I would very much like to get an Area union meeting together sometime in the Spring with Clerk Craft Director Wendy Kempke. If anyone in my area is interested please reach out to me via email (APWUSteward281@gmail.com) and let me know. This could be a great opportunity to get your questions answered and/or to sign up some new members. Please be sure to let the non-members know too, so that they can sign up and learn about the APWU Health Plan.

In Solidarity.

AREA 9 DIRECTOR



by
Lisa
Borchardt

Be A Buddy Not A Bully

I talked to an employee from a small office a few months ago. He stated that he was concerned about filing a grievance because of retaliation from not only the postmaster, but also his fellow employees. This got me to thinking about BULLYING.

Bullying is defined as a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the work place. It can cause physical or emotional harm. It can include verbal abuse, non verbal abuse, psychological abuse and humiliation. Bullying is an offensive, intimidating, insulting and malicious behavior. It is a way to undermine and humiliate a person. It can cause distress and fear in not only the person who is being bullied, but also other employees in the work place. Bullying can also decrease every employee's moral in the work place. Not just the employee being bullied.

Some stats about bullying are:

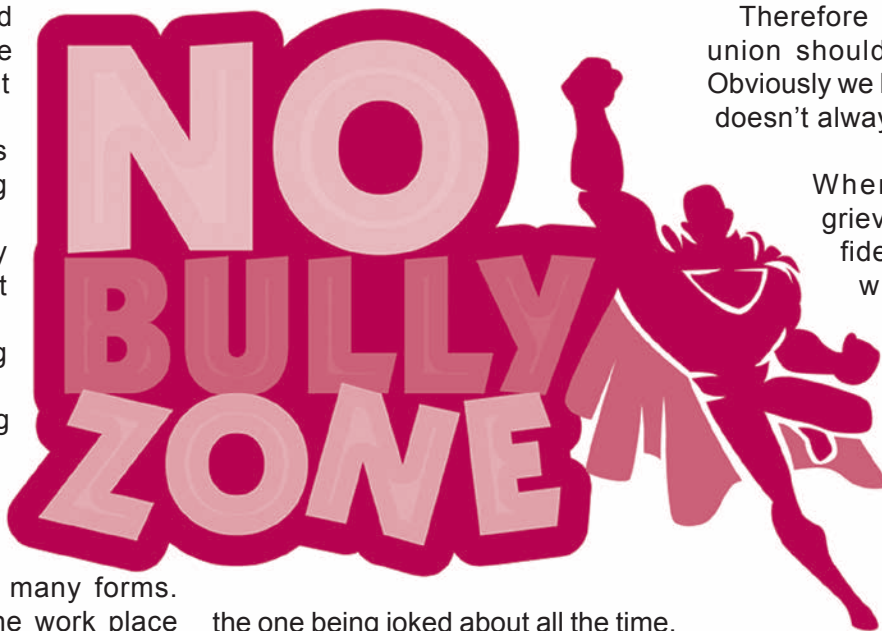
- 75% of employees have been bullied at some time
- Women bully more
- 40-59 year olds is where most bullying occurs
- Women carry an unconscious bias against other women
- Almost all employees feel they

have been treated unfairly at some time during their employment Signs of bullying are:

- Someone feels anxious before coming to work
- Someone feels they are isolated socially at work functions
- Someone is being criticized often
- Someone is being yelled at often
- Someone is being gossiped about

Bullying can be in many forms. Maybe everyone in the work place knows about it. Maybe bullying is one joke that has gone too far.

Everyone likes to joke and have fun. But make sure the same person is not



Therefore management and the union should follow the contract. Obviously we know that management doesn't always follow the contract.

When a steward files a grievance we keep it confidential. And sometimes we can solve a situation by just talking with management. I have not worked in a small office so I do not know what that retaliation can feel like. The member decided after talking with me that he would approach management instead of having me do it. And this worked out well for him.

the one being joked about all the time.

As far as not filing a grievance because of retaliation fears. We have a contract. It has been agreed upon by management and the union.

management instead of having me do it. And this worked out well for him.

As Always Yours in Solidarity!

LEADERSHIP – Starts At The Top!

continued from page 3
a leader with loyalty and dedication.

Assertiveness is not the same as aggressiveness. Rather, it is the ability to clearly state what one expects so that there will be no misunderstandings. A leader must be assertive to get the desired results. Along with assertiveness comes the responsibility to clearly understand what followers expect from their leader.

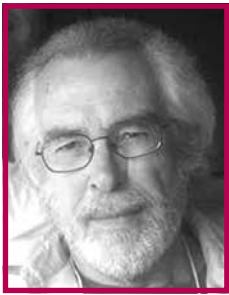
And simply put, humor fosters good camaraderie.

A **sense of humor** is vital to relieve tension and boredom, as well as to defuse hostility. Effective leaders know how to use humor to energize followers. Humor is a form of power that provides some control over the work environment.

For the APWU to grow, our leaders, at the Local, State and National level need to embrace these Leadership Skills and unify us and make us stronger!

In Solidarity.

RETIREE PRESIDENT



by Paul Browning

Retiree Chapter Education Assembly In The U.P. Eh?

On May 16, 17, 18 at the Holiday Inn in Marquette in conjunction with the MPWU Education Assembly, the Michigan State Retiree Chapter will present Retiree education classes. As a service to MPWU members and APWU retirees, their Chapter will provide information concerning the Retirement procedure-what to expect, and Thrift Savings Plan management. Questions can be asked and answered by expert instructors. I am also working on getting representatives from Social Security and Medicare to give information on those subjects for potential and actual retirees. Classes and arrangements for the instructors will be paid for by the Organizing Fund rebate the Chapter receives from the National APWU.

Registration for the classes is \$100 which I realize is a bit steep. Members from State Locals, from 480-81 to 498-99 may contact their Local for

financial assistance for registration and expenses. Members of the State Retiree Chapter in the 498-99 area may also be eligible for financial assistance regarding the registration fee. For further information contact me at email oldhipster54@hotmail.com or cell phone 231-275-6016.

Washington D.C. Gridlock

With a now Democratic Party majority in the House of Representatives, it appears postal workers and retirees can avoid any takeaway legislation AS LONG AS WE CONTINUE TO LET THOSE REPRESENTATIVES KNOW THEY HAVE OUR VOTE BECAUSE OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR US. Keep the emails, letters, and phone calls coming to them on postal issues. The APWU website (apwu.org) is an excellent source for keeping abreast of postal and retiree legislation.

President Trump's wish list federal budget for 2020 includes 100 Billion dollars in savings from unspecified

postal reforms although how he proposes to do such is a mystery when the Executive Branch has no control over the USPS. Trump's budget also proposes cuts of 100 Billion dollars to the federal employee pension plans. And again, here is where our friends in Congress come into play. Only Congress can pass legislation affecting those plans so we must remain vigilant of legislation. However in a startling development, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin informed Congress on March 4 that he will stop making payments into a civil service retirement fund and a postal service retirement fund due to the fact that the Federal Government debt limit had been reached! Now I'm no Wall Street wizard or even an accountant, but I find it quite a shock that an appointed government official can just decide this. Evidently, Mnuchin's reasoning is this will force Congress to raise the debt limit in a way his boss wants. It's all insider political maneuvering as Trump attempts to get the budget cuts he wants to compensate

for the ballooning federal deficit caused by last year's tax cut for the rich and corporations. Hey, who hasn't read about Amazon, Microsoft and a host of other billion dollar earning companies paying a lower tax rate than you or me?

But Secretary Mnuchin says not to worry retirees. As soon as Congress authorizes an increase in the debt limit, he will resume payment into the subject funds. This is the same guy who used a government jet for him and his wife to fly around on expensive vacations. Sorry Steven, but your credibility is zero with me. Day after day we hear ridiculous statements about money from the Trump administration. It's enough to make you feel like the ancient Greek guy Diogenes who wondered around with a lantern looking for an honest man. All I know for sure is that during my lifetime, the only laws that helped me as an average working person were passed through Democrat sponsored legislation so you know who has my vote.

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by Michael O'Hearn

Grievant And Witness Statements

A good witness or grievant statement can make a grievance. Sometimes the only evidence you can use to document a violation of our contract is a good witness statement. For instance, if the supervisor or manager is performing our work, the best evidence is a good witness statement. Unfortunately, not all witness statements are good statements. A good witness statement will answer the questions "who, what, where, when, why, and how." These are the questions they teach journalist to answer when writing a good news article. An example of a statement that answers these questions might be "On September 29th of this year, I, Mike O'Hearn, saw Supervisor John Blow sorting mail into PO boxes in the box section from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM. Not only does this violate our contract, but also, he was doing a poor job of it, making a lot of mistakes." Then, the statement should be signed and dated. The who is Mike O'Hearn and Supervisor John Blow. The what is sorting mail into PO boxes. The where is the box section. The when is September 29th from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM. The why is violating our contract. The how is poorly. Not every statement will need to answer all these questions.

In this example, the why and how will probably not need to be answered to have an effective grievance. However, answering all these questions will not hurt your grievance. I have seen statements like "I saw the supervisor doing clerk work." This statement is worthless. It does not prove anything. Who is the supervisor? When did this happen? What kind of work was performed? Where did it happen? How long did the supervisor work clerk work? Therefore, always get statements that address the key questions. If your witness does not convey a clear message about what happened, talk to the witness and suggest how they might improve her/his statement.

Another problem with witness statements is credibility. You have to ask yourself, "Was the witness in a position to actually see the event described." Check the clock rings of your witnesses. If they were not even working that day, then you cannot rely on that statement. Also, if their statement says somebody told me the supervisor was doing clerk work. This type of statement is no good. If the statement says they saw something in the box section, but they worked on the dock all day, this will be a problem. Can they explain how they saw this event? If the steward witnessed the event, they can write a statement. However, the most credit-

able statement should come from the rank and file members.

Don't write a statement and then send it around for others to sign. These types of statement are not creditable. Have each member write their own statement. Each person will

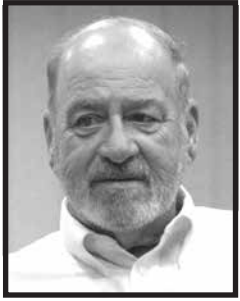
see the event a little differently. This is usually not a problem as it lends credibility to the statements. A witness statement can make or break your case. Therefore, look each statement over and objectively evaluate it. Improve a bad statement if possible. This will result in better grievances.

If blood be the price of all your wealth, Great God, we've paid in full.

Workers Memorial Day April 28

KONO PAKI ©2010

M.P.W.U. RETIREE ADVISOR



by
Al
LaBrecque

A View From The Mitt

Plan Dir., John Marcotte.

“Just because we’re retired, we’re NEVER out of the arena”.

“Paranoid?” Maybe . . . You be the judge.

Postcards From The Past. What’s this?! Another “Dear Postal Retiree” slick postcard from the U.S. Postal Service! What’s up with that? And, wait a minute! When I/we retired, the USPS made it very clear we (at least CSRS) didn’t belong to them anymore. We belonged to OPM! No longer connected to the USPS, how do they have our mailing address inasmuch as I’ve moved to a new location and didn’t notify the USPS of my change of address? I furnished it to OPM. Ah, **OPM!** USPS and OPM in cahoots? The USPS never gave, or gives us **anything** out of the goodness of their hearts. Why this sudden benevolence? What’s the USPS’s true motive?

The first “Dear Postal Retiree” postcard I received last November during FEHBP Open Season furnished info regarding FEHBP choices, sounding like the USPS was our gracious guide to health benefits options best fitting individual retiree’s personal circumstances. Innocent enough, right? I didn’t need their crap so I stuck it in recycling. Then, Western Region Brother Byron Denton called and asked what I thought about it. Byron questioned what the ulterior motive was for USPS contacting retired postal workers about their health insurance coverage. I hadn’t thought about it, didn’t go to the website, and had pitched it. Now, I receive this second “benevolent” postcard saying that **I can remain connected** through the web, Facebook, and sign up for the “free” monthly *Retiree E-Newsletter*. Oh, NO! It’s **they** who want to remain connected! Why?!

At the risk of being an alarmist, something smells like a rat about this. Byron raised valid concerns over the purpose of USPS making such huge mailings to **all postal retirees** at considerable expense. Never mind postage; although it was indicia’d as First Class. Consider the one-side color photo of ‘mature’ retiree happy faces, and printing on the other, plus the two-sided stock it’s printed on. **Why?** Are there just 2-3 of us even questioning this paternalistic shift in behavior? Could it be that USPS is building a propaganda network to influence retirees to buy into, for instance; a **“Postal Only”** health plan? Undercut the 6 FEHBP plans we’re eligible to enroll in? Byron, CA State APWU Health Plan Rep., advises that he has brought this to the attention of APWU Health

Ask yourself as I have; How did USPS; 475 L’Efant Plaza; Room 9670; Washington, D.C. 20260, obtain my current mailing address 27 years after I retired, no longer connected to USPS? **OPM** is the likely source. Pardon me if it appears I’m looking at the proverbial gift horse in the mouth. I AM! Nearly 60 years of dealing with postal management in various forums built in a complete distrust of USPS ulterior motives in anything they do. Benevolence toward their employees, or retirees for that matter, has never been one of their strong suits. This deserves thorough APWU investigation. Nip it in the bud! Reveal USPS’s true motive, if any. What next, a “Dear Postal Retiree” survey? Unfortunately, we know, and so do they, some well-meaning gullible souls will dutifully respond (when will they ever learn?). Deluge our email and Facebook accounts with propaganda on unlimited subjects, including legislation that’s not necessarily in our best interests? They’re not getting mine, not voluntarily anyway.

The above is what I sent to APWU Retirees’ Dept. Dir., Nancy Olumekor, and APWU Exec. V.P. Debby Szeredy, both of whom after a ‘little’ prodding are looking into this concern. If there’s no smoking gun, fine and dandy. No harm, no foul. APWU, at the very least, needs to put the U.S. Postal Service on notice that we’re watching them. We complained when we thought the Staples issue sneaked up on us, a subject for another time. Let’s not be lax by failing to question this curious reaching out to postal retirees by our former employer. What’s in it for them? Did the Tin Man really get a heart? Maybe I’m just shouting; “The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!” But pray the “Russians” don’t come, because if they do, I can promise there will be Hell to pay. **So What** if I’m an old has-been with nothing better to do but conjure up issues of dubious concern, expecting those in leadership to respond with the same level of concern? Appreciate and recognize that we retirees are an asset as APWU eye’s and ear’s in the field. I’d rather be wrong on this one than right. However, fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me! You be the judge.

2019 2.8% COLA “Increase”. The results are in! Everyone’s will be different. 2.8% of a little is a little. 2.8% of a lot is a lot more. After IRS took their slice, deducted the FEHBP premium hike, my annuity actually went up a whopping \$9.71 monthly, for an annual raise of \$116.52. **What will we do** with it all!? That’s not considering Social Security recipients, CSRS retirees, senior’s Medicare premiums jumped erasing any increased S.S. benefit. My

own WEP reduced monthly S.S. benefit (under \$300.) has stayed the same 3 years running. Don’t even get me going on the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) Congress enacted beginning in 1984 that reduced CSRS retiree’s S.S. benefit by a 40% factor. Part of the same legislation that created FERS. That has personally cost me several thousand over nearly 20 years, as it has most S.S. eligible CSRS retirees An Insult! That and the case for establishing a **CPI-E** formula more accurately measuring senior’s cost-of-living. Those two issues **must** be paramount retiree legislative initiatives! Bread & Butter! After all is said and done, we pretty much stayed even, that is unless you figure the spiraling cost of prescription drugs, like insulin. *The hurrieder we go, the behinder we get!*

Condolences: To California State APWU on the unexpected passing of President **Mike Evans**, to the Evans Family, CA State E-Board, members and friends. Brother Evans was a consistent supporter of retiree initiatives and by all accounts, a genuinely good guy. Our heart-felt sympathies go out to Western Region Retiree Delegate; Sister **Pat Williams**, on the recent passing of her daughter. Regardless of age or circumstance; the loss of one’s child brings pain like none other. “Eternal rest grant unto them O’ Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon them. Amen.”

Get Well! I know everyone will join in wishing Flint Retiree Chapter president emeritus **Patricia “Patty” Miller** our warmest regards to the loyalist of our Chapter leaders as she continues to rehab from a series of health issues. Likewise, best wishes to Flint Chapter V.P. **Maxine Hale** as she recoups. Not too many of us are able to dodge the ailments of our senior years. As humorist Will Rogers allegedly quipped; *“This old age ain’t for sissies!”*

Missed Again! Seems like every year I’m a day late and dollar short commemorating **February 11th**, the end of the 44-day 1936-37 Flint Great Sit-down Strike to gain Union recognition, establishing collective bargaining with the giant GM Corp. My own Union roots were planted when my UAW Pioneer Father was a participant, and Mother part of the Women’s Emergency Brigade in support of the strikers. Mom being pregnant with me, you might say I was born into the labor movement. But, I digress. UAW in Flint celebrates February 11th as **White Shirt Day**. There’s an APWU connection. The Father of White Shirt Day was Buick UAW Local activist, Bert Christensen, Father of late Flint APWU member Kirsten (Christensen) Ing. Establishing White Shirt Day on the date of the victory over GM is when UAW workers wear white shirts to work, demonstrating equality

to the boss. I had the good fortune to attend several of those commemorations, met many Sitdowners, Women’s Emergency Brigade veterans, and one of the Reuther Brothers, Roy. Dad, a torch solderer “on the line” at Fisher Body #1 South Unit, proudly wore the same white shirt, repleat with its tiny burn holes, every Feb. 11th. This is a significant date in our heritage of the modern labor movement in Michigan and Flint “Cradle of Labor”.

Chickens Coming Home To Roost. With tax season upon us there’s been a rude awakening among taxpayers, especially those in my bracket, that their 2018 return of withholding will be considerably less due to the generous tax cuts enacted by a GOP led Paul Ryan and Mitch “Milktoast” McConnell Congress and the tRump administration. Yup, the same tax cut that gave the top 1% a **permanent** tax break, and the rest of us a 3-year sunset. It was evident from the beginning that our “cut” would show up in the end . . . from our return! Perhaps we do treat withholding as an interest-free account, but it’s what folks, especially seniors in our tax bracket do. Countless taxpayers, seniors like ourselves, claim “Single or Married 0” so we don’t owe IRS but receive a lump sum refund of our money. We almost come to count on it for purchase of big ticket items, home maintenance projects, a down payment, or set aside in an interest-bearing savings account for a rainy day. I don’t know why this should come as news to anyone. Got to pay better attention! We already got our shortfall money in 12 installments, approximately the same amount reduced from our withholding refund. Remember this GOP ‘favor tax cut’ when you go to the ballot box! Remember the thinly veiled GOP politician’s attempt to dupe us by trumpeting their great tax cut for the masses in their bids for re-election. Let me say it once again; *“We’re just old, not stupid!”*

Retiree Sisters & Brothers: Get involved in any way you can! With your Local Retiree Chapter if you have one, contact Members of Congress on our paramount legislation via written letter (best), email, phone, or personal visit (even better) to their district office. No effort is too small. Attend a Chapter meeting. Oh, I know . . . *“You’re retired and don’t want@#%&!* anything to do with it, by gee whiz!”* I get that! As State Chapter president Browning admonished regarding that negative philosophy; *“. . . that’s like cutting off your nose to spite your face.”* C’mon! Gives us purpose in life! What better do you really have to do? **You’re Retired!** Please go back to the top and read the quote. Thank you, and **Think Spring!**

Solidarity Forever!

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by James Stevenson

The Forgotten Tool And An Under Utilized Defense:

PRE-INTERVIEW CONSULTATION AND CITING MODIFIED DISCIPLINE

Our contract provides an extremely beneficial but rarely utilized right for the employees that we represent and that is the right to a "PRE-INTERVIEW CONSULTATION." This is typically what happens. Management contacts an employee, informs them of the need to conduct an investigative interview or pre-disciplinary interview, and the Union Steward is requested or notified. All to often, the Union Steward marches off and sits down in the meeting and begins the interview without finding out the specifics of the meeting or meeting with the employee in advance of the interview. This is what I refer to as "Meeting in the Blind."

Simply put, this means that as a Union Steward you have not found out what the meeting is about and what evidence does the employer intend to use or has in its possession regarding the issue. Our contract allows for a "Pre-Interview Consultation" [JCIM page 155; paragraph 3] in which as a Union Steward you have

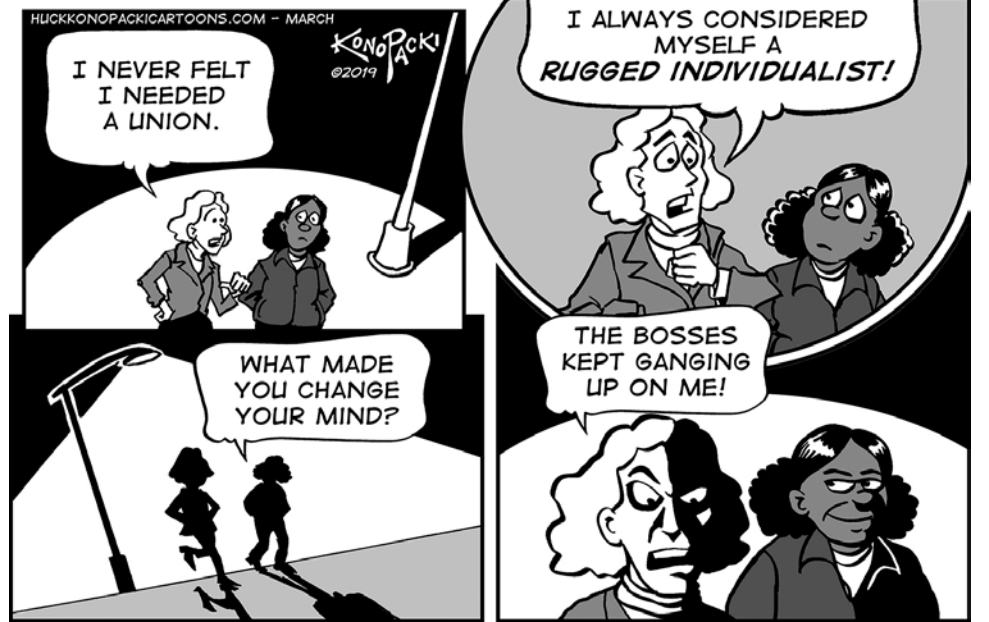
the right to meet with the employee and give them consultation on the subject of the investigation proposed by management BEFORE the interview takes place. This meeting is crucial due to the fact that we all know that the responses to the investigative interview or Pre-disciplinary interview are often Exhibit No. 1 in the majority of disciplinary cases as management tends to cite "excerpts" from these investigations in the actual discipline.

As a Union Steward you want to make sure that the employee is fully prepared for the interview so that the employee is reasonably aware of what they are about to walk into and what evidence management is relying upon. This Pre-Interview Consultation is your opportunity to speak privately with the employee without the interference of management. The "Pre-Interview Consultation" is more than just a contractual provision it derives from the Federal Law more specifically the "Weingarten Rule." It is a contractual violation for the employer to deny the

employee the right to meet privately with the Union Steward and engage in this all too important consultation.

It is extremely advantaging for Management to "blind-side" an employee with the subject or context of an investi-

In fact, article 16.10 states in part, "If a disciplinary action has been modified, the original disciplinary action may be modified by pen and ink changes so as to obscure the original disciplinary action in the employee's Official Personnel Folder and supervisor's personnel records, or



gation especially when the employee starts answering questions without the benefit of being advised by the Union Steward in advance of the line of questioning. As a Union Steward you fully have the right under Article 17 and 31 to initiate an information request for any and all documents, statements, video tape, or evidence management is relying upon in the investigation. Management may state, "Oh, well it is an ongoing investigation and the investigation is not complete yet." Your response is this, "Oh, I fully understand that, but what I am requesting is any and all documentation that you have or are relying upon at this time." There is no contractual requirement or pre-requisite that the Union has to wait for the full completion or exhaustion of a management investigation in order to request information relative to our investigation in preparation for the interview.

Citing Modified Discipline In A Present Action

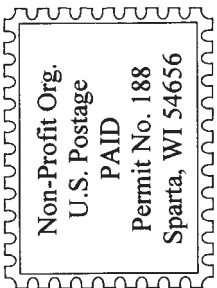
Article 16.10 (JCIM page 150) and a 1988 Step 4 resolution prohibits the citing, utilization, or reliance upon previously modified discipline unless the exceptions as identified under the section are present. Many times, we focus solely on whether or not the modified discipline is cited in the "past elements" as that is a blaring violation but there is more to it than that. If an employee has a 14-day suspension from let us say January 15, 2017 that was reduced or modified to a LOW (Letter of Warning) the USPS is prohibited from mentioning the original discipline (14-day suspension) in any subsequent discipline.

the original action may be deleted from the records and the discipline record as modified.

[Management cannot state anywhere: "The employee had a 14-day suspension which was modified to a LOW."] Management can only list or make reference to the LOW or the final outcome of the modification.

Many USPS officials are aware of this prohibition so they do not list the original discipline in the "past elements" but they have become "slick" so they mention the original discipline in the Step 2 denial or somewhere else in the body of the discipline. This is just an attempt to make an "end-run" around the language while at the same time memorializing the fact that the employee had a 14-day suspension without specifically citing that in the "past elements" section. If you see the original discipline listed anywhere in the grievance file by management make the argument that it is violative of the contract and the discipline is procedurally defective. If the reviewing and concurring official (or the issuing supervisor) has seen the original discipline than we argue that the USPS has impermissibly considered the original discipline {how do you un-ring the bell?}. Management often enters the original disciplinary documents, this is also a violation as those original documents should not even be in existence in its original format. Entering the original documents is simply managements attempt to "couch" the improper citing of the past elements into an actual exhibit during the grievance process.

In Solidarity.



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