

# Michigan MESSENGER



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## PRESIDENT

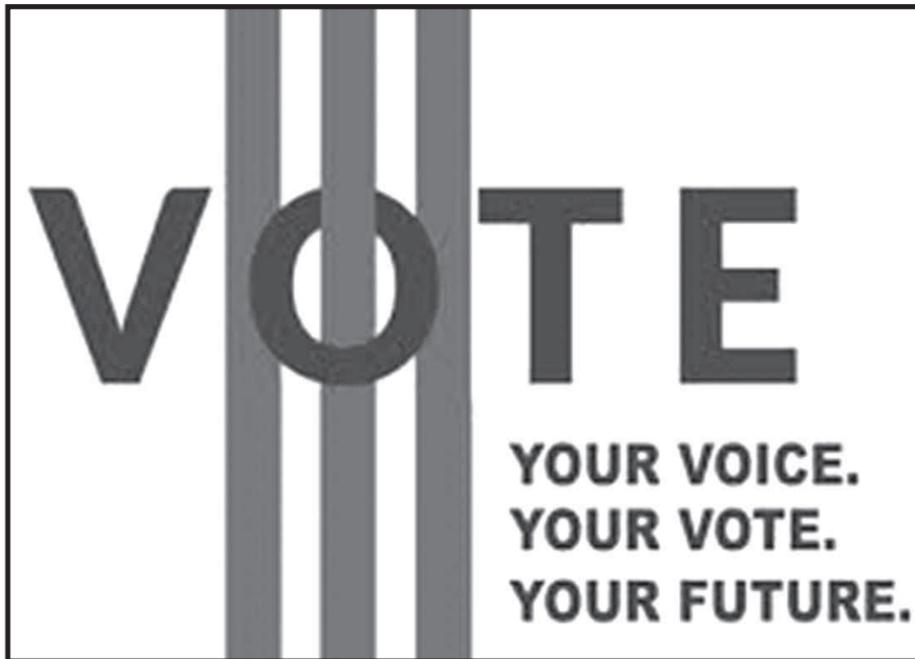
# Your Voice Matters



by  
Michael  
Mize

I can not explain to each member how important your voice is. I have been fielding calls for several years from Clerks in small offices that feel left behind. As an organization the MPWU continues to fight for the things that our members bring to our attention. You tell us and we do everything we can to make positive change in the Contracts, Union, etc.

What more can you do? Well, one of the loudest voices you will ever have is your vote. Our voting percentages are always very low.



I can't and wouldn't tell you how to vote. I can say that there are multiple social media platforms to watch with no lack of opinion and information. The National Web-page has candidate statements.

One of the newest and best things will be the ballot information including candidate information. This new added piece of information came from new language in the Constitution. That language got its start in Michigan and we fought hard to get it. Use all these avenues to make an educated decision and vote.

We need to make a change; we need to vote in higher numbers.

We need to make the leadership take notice of who we are.

Your Vote is Your Voice don't throw it away.

# 2019 PPA Awards – Congratulations To All Of The Michigan Winners

### Best Creative Writing:

**Honorable Mention:** "Health Care Poem," *The Communicator*, Ferndale, Michigan; Paul Felton – Retiree, Former Editor

printer from camera-ready copy prepared by the printer.

senger, Lansing, Michigan; John Greathouse, Editor

### FOR BEST NEW EDITOR

**Honorable Mention:** Adrienne Vandreumel, *The Western Michigan Area Local Voice*; Grand Rapids, Michigan

**Honorable Mention:** *Michigan Mes-*

**HANK GREENBERG AWARD**

### Best Cartoon:

**First Place Best Cartoon:** *Michigan Messenger*, Lansing, Michigan; John Greathouse, Editor

### Best Photo:

**First Place Best Photo:** *The Pacer*, Lansing, Michigan; John Greathouse, Editor

### OVERALL EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**Best Non-Professional (A)** : Defined as a publication printed by a commercial printer from camera-ready copy; prepared by the APWU editor.

**First Place Best Non-Professional:** *The Western Michigan Area Local Voice*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Adrienne Vandreumel, Editor

**Honorable Mention:** *The Pacer*, Lansing, Michigan; John Greathouse, Editor

**Best Professional:** Defined as a publication printed by a commercial



EDITOR

On Your Marks . . .



by John Greathouse

hold an Awards Dinner to showcase and honor the members and their publications that have excelled in producing dedication and work in producing the best source of information to build their locals!



We are rapidly approaching the AWe are rapidly approaching the APWU Elections and you will read both here in this paper and online, that the vote this time around is going to be epic!

To help you along the path for voting, you will receive with your ballot and book with each candidate position on current events as well as to why they should receive your vote.

Last time we had an election for the APWU in 2016, voter turnout was terrible! 28% of the member who were eligible to vote did so! I know that we can do much better than that without question.

Looking at the key offices that are up for voting, President, VP, Industrial Relation and Legislative Director, we have a good deal of highly qualified members running and what it comes down to is this one simple thing... getting yourself educated about the candidates so read the book that comes with your ballot, do a little research online and VOTE!

high quality publications. There are 14 categories with a First Place and Honorable Mention that are given out. Publication for Michigan Locals received three First Place and Four Honorable Mention awards. Congratulations to all of the winners for their outstanding

Get Set . . . Go VOTE! Don't put off filling out your ballot, take a few minutes and let see if this election, the members of the APWU can actually have a good turnout of voters that is actually much closer to 100%! In Solidarity

The Fix May Be In

by Joe Gordon

If you haven't seen it yet the following was posted on the APWU website:

"On Monday, Apr. 29, members of Congress introduced H.R. 2382, the USPS Fairness Act. This legislation would repeal, in full, the onerous pre-funding of retiree health care benefits mandate Congress put in place in 2006.

The mandate requires the Postal Service to prefund its retiree health care benefits 75 years in advance, paying for retirement health care for individuals who haven't been born yet, let alone enter the workforce. The mandate is accountable for 92 percent of the Postal Service's net losses since 2007 and is a constant threat to the financial sustainability of the Postal Service."

Congress will once again attempt to solve the "problem."

Unfortunately, I was unable to find the full text of what's in the bill, but I suspect that it will once again include mandated Medicare Part B for Postal Retirees. My rationale for such a prediction is that the same requirement has been included in the previous Bills that addressed the same problem.

I recently received a copy of what was called the "USPS Retiree Quarterly Newsletter"; since this is the first time I have received such a missive I can only assume that this is the first edition of this four-page communique. I think I can also safely assume that it will not be the last. The newsletter went on to provide a number of informative items regarding senior living, actually good information for everyone in general.

The last page, however, was reserved for information regarding – you guessed it – Medicare integration for Postal retirees.

Now, it is true that currently working APWU members are not yet considering the Medicare issue but there is certainly an impact by what else is in H.R. 2382. It appears that the bill will include considerable financial relief concerning the prefunding issue. Thus, by clearing up the Postal Service's big financial problem there will presumably be funds to do such things as: fully staff post offices; pro- continued on page 8

PPA Conference

I had the opportunity to attend the National Postal Press Association Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. But unlike most of the brothers and sisters attending, I was an Instructor for the Photography/Photojournalism class for the second time and, I have to say... I have not had that much fun in a while and enjoyed teaching everyone and watching them learn and grow as photographers.

New this year was a challenge for everyone in attendance, a Speed Shoot. Each person has 24 hours to capture an image based on a theme that is randomly drawn just before the start and turn it in. Then everyone was able to vote for their favorite 3 photos. The creativity that came forward was fantastic and I am looking forward to doing it again at the next PPA Conference in 2021.

At the end of the conference, the PPA

Thus, as inferred by the above title,

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:

Table with 4 columns: Local Name, Local Number, Local Name, Local Name. Includes Battle Creek, Central MI, Cheboygan, Detroit District, Farmington, Flint, Jackson, Ludington, Muskegon, Roger City, Sault Ste Marie, Southwest MI, Stevensville, Traverse City, Troy Local, Western MI.

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Articles and correspondence to the Editor may be sent to MPWU - Michigan Messenger, John Greathouse - Editor, PO Box 27303, Lansing, MI 48909-7303. Articles must be signed to be printed (your name may be withheld upon request). Articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.



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## VETERANS' DIRECTOR

## Veteran News



by  
John P.  
Smeekens

### Get The Information You Need

Go to the following web site for The **VA Welcome Kit** which guides you to the benefits and services you've earned with step-by-step instructions.

[https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/?utm\\_source=Newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=VAntage](https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=VAntage)

### But Don't Forget Your V.S.O.

#### The New Mission Act!!!

On June 6, hundreds of thousands of veterans enrolled in VA health care became eligible for new expanded community care rules, allowing them to seek private-sector medical care at taxpayer expense. The moment has been a year in the making, and brought with it **significant concerns from veterans groups** who fear the massive rules shift could ultimately undermine existing VA services. At issue is the Mission Act, a focal point of President Donald Trump's reform plan for the sprawling veteran's administration. The legislation — passed by a wide bipartisan vote in Congress last summer — mandates a review of department facilities, an overhaul of the department's caregiver stipend, and the community care changes. This last section has been Wilkie's main focus for the past year, even before he was confirmed for the top VA job (he worked as acting secretary for several weeks before his nomination).

But after months of buildup and controversies, Wilkie's approach in recent days to the dramatic rule changes has been a sharp contrast to the commander-in-chief's proclamations. The VA secretary insists it is a transformational moment, but also one that won't turn operations at VA upside down. Under the changes, Veterans who live more than 30 minutes from a Veterans Affairs medical clinic or face a wait of more than 20 days for most health care appointments would be eligible for expanded community care programs. Wilkie and VA officials argue those standards fall in line with military health care and private sector benchmarks. The updated standards would replace the 40-mile, 30-day guidelines currently in place for most veterans. For specialty care, veterans would have a 60-minute-drive or 28-day wait standard. About one-third of all VA medical appointments are currently handled outside the department's health care system now, a figure that has decreased in recent years. Wilkie and senior department officials have cited that as likely evidence the new changes won't create a spike in outside care use, since most veterans are happy with their current care.

#### Mission Act Questions

Here are several Questions, Veterans

have asked, about the new Mission Act;

#### General Health Care

**When can I receive community care?** Eligibility for community care depends on your individual health care needs or circumstances. You should discuss community care eligibility with your VA care team to determine if you are eligible.

**Can I get dental care through the MISSION Act?** Eligibility for dental services has not changed under the MISSION Act. You should talk to your VA care team about eligibility for dental services.

**How does a community provider know I am eligible to receive community care?** If your VA care team has determined that you are eligible for community care and you chose a community provider, VA will send the provider a referral and authorization prior to you receiving care. You must receive approval from VA prior to obtaining care from a community provider in most circumstances.

**I was authorized for community care under the Choice program. What happens now?** The Choice program expired on June 6, 2019, and specific Choice eligibility for community care is no longer being used. If you were eligible for community care under Choice, you should speak with your VA care team or a VA staff member at your local VA medical facility about updated eligibility for community care.

#### Urgent Care

**How do I become eligible for the urgent care benefit?** You must be enrolled in VA health care and have received care through VA from either a VA or community provider within the past 24 months to be eligible for the urgent care benefit.

**How can I find an urgent care provider?** To find an urgent care location in VA's contracted network, use the VA facility locator at **Find VA Locations**. Select the link entitled "**Find VA approved urgent care locations and pharmacies near you**".

**What is the difference between urgent care and emergency care?** Urgent care consists of medical services provided for minor illnesses or injuries that are not life-threatening such as strep throat, pink eye, or influenza. Emergency care consists of inpatient or outpatient hospital services that are necessary to prevent death or serious impairment of health such as severe chest pain, seizures or loss of awareness, heavy uncontrollable bleeding, or moderate to severe burns.

**Do I have to pay a copayment if I receive urgent care that relates to my service-connected condition?** Copayments for urgent care are different from other VA medical copayments.

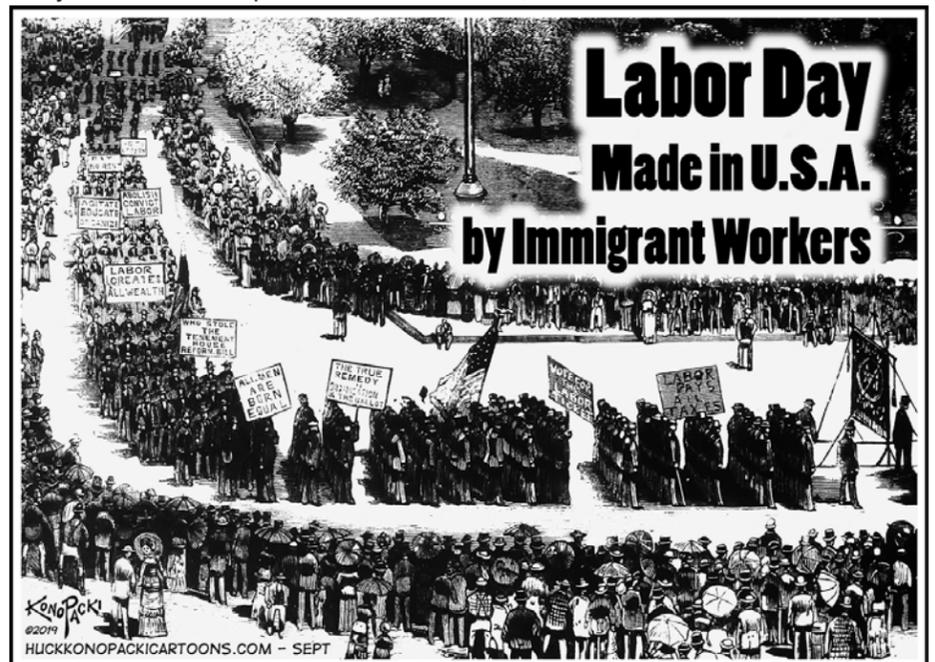
**Copayments for urgent care depend on your assigned priority group and the number of times you visit any urgent care provider in a calendar year. Visit the Urgent Care webpage for more information about copayments.**

**How do I get prescription medication related to an urgent care visit?** VA will pay for or fill prescriptions for urgent care. For urgent care prescription medication longer than a 14-day supply, the prescription must be submitted to VA to be filled. For urgent prescriptions written by an urgent care provider, you can fill a 14-day supply of medication at a contracted pharmacy within the VA network, in VA, or at a noncontracted pharmacy. If a noncontracted pharmacy is used, you must pay for the prescription and then file a claim for reimbursement with your local VA medical facility.

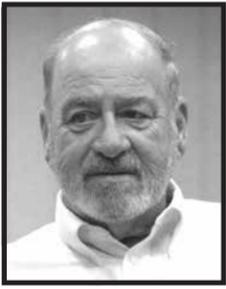
#### Vietnam Blue Water Veterans Win!!!

The Department of Justice will drop its appeal of a federal court decision awarding **disability benefits to tens of thousands of veterans** who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants while serving in the seas near Vietnam, handing advocates what appears to be a final legal victory. In a filing with the Supreme Court Tuesday, Justice Department officials said they will not argue for overturning the **Procopio vs. Wilkie decision from January** which undid years of Veterans Affairs policy denying benefits to about 90,000 "blue water" Navy veterans. Congressional Budget Office officials had estimated that awarding the benefits to the blue water veterans could total about \$1.1 billion over 10 years, but VA officials in the past have estimated the total could rise to more than \$5.5 billion. Justice lawyers had **twice asked for deadline extensions to file an appeal**, even as VA officials publicly said they believed the lower court decision should stand. Congressional leaders and outside advocates had also argued against an appeal. At issue is a VA decision in the past to treat the sailors' disability benefit claims differently from other troops who served in

Vietnam. Under current rules, the blue water veterans can receive medical care for their illnesses through VA. But to receive disability benefits — worth up to several thousand dollars a month — they must prove that their ailments are directly connected to toxic exposure while on duty. That's not the case for other Vietnam veterans, who are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange and other defoliants known to cause serious and rare cancers. So while a veteran who served on the shoreline could receive disability payouts after contracting Parkinson's Disease or prostate cancer, another vet who served on a ship a few miles away would have to provide evidence of direct contact with hazardous chemicals. Advocates have argued that is impossible, given the time that has elapsed since the exposure and the poor toxic exposure monitoring at the time. In a 9-2 decision in January, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit agreed, stating that Congress never intended to exclude servicemembers in the seas around Vietnam when they awarded presumptive benefits for illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure. Last month, House lawmakers unanimously passed legislation echoing the court decision in an effort to ensure any future appeal or legal challenge would not overturn the benefits. **And it's Official; President Trump signed the Blue Water Bill into Law on June 25th, 2019!!!** The legislation extends disability compensation to personnel who served off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, within 12 nautical miles of the coast of Vietnam and Cambodia, along a line of demarcation spelled out in the law. Those eligible include veterans with one or more of the presumptive diseases whose claims were previously denied. It also includes those with new claims. The bill also covers veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone between Sept. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971, as well as children with spina bifida born to veterans who served in Thailand between January 1962 and May 1975.



## M·P·W·U·R·E·T·I·R·E·E·A·D·V·I·S·O·R



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

# A View From The Mitt

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

**We Got Mail:** Our former U.S. Postal Service employer has been showering retirees, starting last November; with two “Dear Postal Retiree” colorful postcards, elderly happy faces on one side, message on the other subtly alluding to wellness, Open Season, Medicare and FEHB. Just received the **2nd First Class** envelope from USPS, L’Efant Plaza, Wash., DC. Inside, as with the first envelope was this slick, 2-page, 4-sided, replete with more colorful happy face photos on each page was the **USPS RETIREE - Quarterly Newsletter**, Summer 2019. The first was the “Spring 2019”. **Have retired members been paying attention?** Have retirees even wondered what this sudden display of benevolence from our former employer is all about? Well, I have! This has been my view since receipt of the 2nd postcard in March, and you’re about to read it, and what has transpired since.

Readers may recall a previous column wherein I raised the specter of; What’s in it for them? How did the USPS obtain my current mailing address? I’ve relocated and didn’t notify them. When I retired, I was emphatically told I no longer belonged to the USPS. I belonged to OPM. The USPS never gave us a damned thing out of the goodness of their cold hearts. There **has to be an ulterior motive!** The Spring Newsletter is enlightening, but not until you get to page 4. A Psychology 101 trip down the Yellow Brick Road! This is what I wrote in late May:

Re-reading paragraph-by-paragraph, I detected a clever piece of propaganda wrapped in a pretty package, setting up the retiree recipient for the inevitable pitch. Let’s label it for what it is; the USPS “Ministry of Propaganda” (MOP)! A classic salesman’s technique for getting a customer to agree to a series of positive statements, a “Yes-Yes” frame of mind, then plant the seed, set the hook! Pleasing to the eye photos on each page, the photo on page 1 taking the cake! A senior couple side-by-side in beach chairs, holding hands (like the Viagra commercial), on a sandy beach facing the ocean waves and a brilliant sunset (or Lake Huron at sunrise). Can almost hear the music. What really struck a nerve was when my wife handed me the mail and I muttered “propaganda”, and she said; “Ya’ but it’s got a lot of good stuff in it.” Worse yet, she thought it was from the Union! Yikes! Hook, line and sinker!

**Page 1.** (Spring 2019) Emphasis on

‘wellness’ and staying informed. Various topics to be addressed. Medicare at the top of the list and; “...**just a few topics we will cover**”. An ‘invitation’ to subscribe to a monthly e-newsletter. How nice. Now they want to get my e-mail to feed me their B.S. on a monthly basis. Select the *Stay Connected* link. **27 years later** and my former benevolent employer just now “Thanks” me “for my service”? The same employer that tried to fire me twice?! Let’s label it for what it is; a load of **condensed crap!**

**Page 2.** Okay. Good info. Your survivor benefits should your spouse predecease you, the annuitant. An invitation to submit questions via e-mail (in case they didn’t capture it on first try). And, Fraud Watch. Common sense stuff. Photo: A nice elderly couple sharing a laptop. Cozy.

**Page 3.** “Sweet Dreams” Indeed! Photo of an old duffer snoozing, about to break his neck. Really? Tips on how to sleep better? Pretty vanilla. But the other panel IS useful information for survivor spouses and beneficiaries. And then there’s . . .

**Page 4. Bingo!!!** There it was; **Medicare Advantage!** “For many, the cost of a Medicare Advantage plan is the same or less than their FEHBP plan when they are enrolled in Medicare Part A and B (emphasis mine). A subtle planting the seed of doubt in the FEHBP plan retirees have, **Medicare eligible retirees**, while pointing seniors down the primrose path of Medicare Advantage plans. I see a thinly disguised attempt to promote Medicare Parts A & B, which we **know** is a financial boon to FEHB plans, including our own. Equally disturbing is USPS comparing Medicare Advantage plans to our FEHBP, a portion of those premiums being funded by USPS. Got to ask yourself; Bottom line dollar motive? Undercut FEHBP? Gateway to a Medicare based **Postal Only** plan?

Excuse me if I have an ingrained well-earned distrust in virtually **anything** our former employer does, especially when it’s conducted under the guise of their new-found facade of benevolence. I ain’t buying it! Maybe I’m paranoid, but there’s a familiar odor here. Perhaps we should apply the tips on Fraud on page 3 to this masterpiece of USPS’s “Ministry of Propaganda” (MOP). I feel vindicated for my “Chicken Little, the sky is falling” rant in a previous column questioning the two precursor “Dear Postal Retiree” postcards prepping retirees for something bigger to come, giving rise to my suspicious nature. Lo’ & behold! One of those instances when you would rather be wrong than right.

Ah Hah! Now I get it! USPS propaganda wrapped in a pretty package! I **knew** I smelled something like this

before; **EI/QWL!** Employee Involvement/Quality of Work Life. The 1980’s USPS sales pitch tactic for a company union all wrapped in a pretty package; designed to circumvent union contracts. Jointness. Team concept. Appoint facilitators preferably from union ranks a.k.a. soon to become 204b’s. A union-busting tactic developed by ultra-conservative ‘consulting’ firms hired by employers to sell their venom. In response to USPS attempts to ram EI/QWL down our throats in the ‘80’s, we adopted the official slogan; “APWU Yes! EI/QWL No!” EI/QWL failed but not without damages. This time, FEHBP benefits appears to be their target. *To be forewarned is to be forearmed!* You be the judge. But, I suggest you sniff the bait before you bite it. (Have to say it; I was surprised to learn there are APWU candidates for national office, officers of large Locals, who didn’t know what EI/QWL is).

**Update:** (As the above was written in late May; quite a bit has transpired since. I admit to being ‘wordy’ and bane of editors for the length of columns. I try to leave no stone unturned. So, please bear with me.

In my view it’s critical!)

**APWU Retirees’ Dept. Director, Nancy Olumekor** gave a detailed report during a recent retiree leadership telecon. Sister Olumekor, along with **APWU Health Plan Director, John L. Marcotte**, among APWU officers meeting with management, confronted USPS regarding these curious mailings. USPS admitted obtaining current retiree’s mailing addresses from OPM. Considering the mailings are directed to **ALL** postal retirees, estimated to be some 200,000, not just APWU bargaining unit retirees, this is no small effort. USPS expressed surprise APWU questioning their motives when **none of our sister postal unions have raised the issue.** Dir. Olumekor drilled down on the Spring quarterly newsletter wherein it addressed Medicare Advantage plans vs. FEHBP, pointing out the information given was misleading. That USPS failed to caution that if a Medicare eligible retiree switched from their FEHBP enrollment to a Medicare Advantage plan, the retiree **must “suspend”** their FEHBP, or lose eligibility to return to FEHBP forever. Dir. Marcotte questioned USPS’s announcements for webinars featuring Aetna, GEHA, private plans, and not any of the postal unions plans.

Management has been confronted. There are to be follow up meetings with USPS. In the meantime, a second “USPS RETIREE Quarterly Newsletter, Summer 2019” was received. Pretty vanilla, generic, common sense stuff. Fluff. But, no clarification regarding the critical “suspension” procedure. Still luring computer savvy retirees to **remain connected** via signing up for

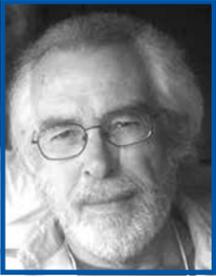
monthly USPS e-bulletins thus obtaining retiree’s e-mail, or via asking questions by e-mail. USPS seeking greater access to retirees to deluge us with their propaganda cleverly melded to; *Dazzle ‘em with brilliance, and baffle ‘em with B.S.!* Stay tuned!

**Latest Info at Press Time!** Update to the USPS ‘Ministry of Propaganda’ (MOP) concerted efforts to win the hearts and minds of retired postal workers with a **USPS E-NEWSLETTER** expounding on the merits of **Medicare Integration!** If that doesn’t raise red flags, set off alarm bells, what will?! A form of “Medicare For All”. Dovetails with PMG Megan Brennan “business model” proposal for the USPS. We should have only one response; **Leave your hands off our FEHBP benefit! Not on our backs!** The ‘ulterior motive’ for USPS’s sudden interest in their former employees is laid bare with the E-Newsletter revealing **Medicare Integration.** Good for them, not so much for us. Don’t get duped with this pig in a poke. Stay tuned!

**Welcome!** Stepping up to succeed Sister **Patricia A. “Patty” Miller’s** 20-year outstanding tenure as Flint MI Area Local Retiree Chapter president is; FMAL Retiree Chapter member; **Deborah “Debbie” Gorney**, appointed as *interim president* until the next scheduled Chapter election. A career-long APWU member; Debbie has a sound labor background, having been closely involved as spouse of a former Local UAW officer. **Welcome** to the arena, Sister!

**Requiem:** I was at once stunned and deeply saddened upon being called to be informed of the sudden and unexpected passing of APWU Southern Region National Retiree Delegate; **Elizabeth “Beth” Bobo**, age 61. Just 5 days earlier, Beth had Facebooked me a birthday greeting. It’s a sad loss for the 4 remaining National Retiree Delegates, Southern Region active and retired members, and those of us who had the good fortune to have worked closely with Beth over 20 years as fellow National Retiree Delegates, and on a personal level. No one had a kinder heart, gentler soul, or more dedicated to representing the best interests of their retiree constituents. *“Eternal rest grant unto Elizabeth O’ Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon her. Amen.”*

**APWU National Officer Elections:** Whew! Three (3) “Teams” competing. I had intended to present my views on what promises to be a contentious campaign. That I’m applying a 2-part litmus test for those candidates Retirees’ Dept. members are eligible to vote for. **1.** Candidate’s record/history of their positions with regard to Retiree Involvement initiatives; pro, con, or indifferent. **2.** Candidate’s position on *continued on page 5*

**R·E·T·I·R·E·E·P·R·E·S·I·D·E·N·T****Vote In APWU National Elections**

by  
**Paul  
Browning**

During the second week of September of this year ballots for the elections of APWU National Officers will be mailed to all members' homes including APWU Retirees. The ballots will be included in a magazine which will have 1000-word statements from the candidates. As retirees we are eligible to vote for seven (7) Washington D.C. resident officers. They are the following: President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer (these three (3) essentially are in charge of the APWU and control the direction of our Union and how dues money is spent), Human Relations Director (very helpful on disability retirement issues), APWU Health Plan Director (works on coordinating our Union health insurance benefits), Legislative Director (our Union lobbyist who works with a staff trying to convince Congressional Representatives to vote for pro-postal workers and postal retirees issues), and Retirees Department Director (works to organize retirees in political efforts for maintaining and increasing postal retiree benefits, increase the number of APWU Retiree members and their representation with-



in the Union, educate retirees on their retirement benefits and help resolve problems pertaining to obtaining such benefits). The results of the election will determine where the APWU is headed in the next three (3) years.

I strongly urge Retiree members to read all the candidate statements. As has been the case for about the last 50 years, candidates are running in so-called "teams". The purpose of such teams is that candidates on them can pool their money to make mass mailings to members which no doubt will be arriving soon in your mailbox. Now you are NOT OBLIGATED to vote for an entire "Teams" candidate. Indeed, the

candidates will only be identified with a (I) if they are an incumbent and the notation of the Local Union they are from. If you want to know more even more about them, the ubiquitous Facebook is awash in information and postings both pro and con on a number of candidates. However, as with all subjects on social media, take what you read with a grain of salt. There are plenty of positive and negative postings and promises so as they say-consider the source. I am rather fortunate myself as I am personally acquainted with many candidates and have spoken with them on an individual basis. But the choice is up to you and it is a very important choice.

National Union officers, along with how successful they are in dealing with USPS Management and the Federal Government, control the fate of Postal Workers and Retirees. And make no mistake, still working members and retirees are tied together. You can bet if one group gets the shaft the other one will too. As my own vote, I consider what the APWU in the last three years has done for retirees as well as the members on the workroom floor. Obviously, my first concern is how well the Retiree Department Director has done in the job and how the other officers we can vote for have supported the Director in performing the duties I listed in the above job description.

All the candidates out there no matter what "Team" they are running on have some good qualifications. Whoever wins, we will all come together and work together

for our Union, the past is the past and we must look to the future together. The important thing is **TO VOTE!** No matter how you fill out your ballot, just do it. In the last APWU National Elections, barely 33% of eligible retiree members filled out their ballots and mailed them in the pre-paid envelope. That percentage was still better than the 28% of still working members who voted. Come on, it's a simple matter, read the magazine, fill out the ballot with your choice and drop it in the mailbox. That choice is for the future of APWU Retirees and that of ALL members of the APWU and it will be in your mailbox. It's up to you to decide, but make a decision and **JUST VOTE!**

## A View From The Mitt

*continued from page 4*

proposed resolutions to amend the Constitution establishing eligibility for Local and State Retiree Chapters to elect delegates to the National Convention with full voice and vote (Ratio 1-25, 1-100, 1 per Chapter or variation thereof to be determined). Due to the length of the above; I'll simply state that **above all**, in our zeal to support and elect candidates of our choice, it's at least as critical to **Get Out The Retiree Vote!** A barely 30% ballot return is unacceptable! A Local or Chapter's percentage of members voting is a direct reflection of a Local or Chapter's leadership, or lack thereof. Ballots will be mailed in September with candidate statements, instructions, your ballot, and prepaid postage return envelope. In my view; the minority governing the majority is not true democracy. I will be revealing my endorsements shortly in whatever forums available within the rules. I am, however, very pleased to congratulate our own MPWU State Chapter president, **Paul J. Browning**, re-elected without opposition as our Central Region Retiree Delegate to the APWU National Convention. And, I'll say it again; **If you fail to vote for who or what you want, don't bitch about who or what you get!**

As I prepare to go out and visit my Area 9 offices, I am grateful to be fully armed with information to convince people to join the union. Wendy Kempke, our Clerk Craft Director has given us plenty of information to use. I want to thank her for that! I have all the latest "hot issues" from lead clerk duties to custodial duties. I have Health Plan information, legislative issues and APW ABA information in my folder. I also have Voluntary Benefits information.

But all of this information is not going to do any good for some people . . .

Some people do not understand that the APWU got them their breaks, lunches, wages, health plans over-

**A·R·E·A·9·D·I·R·E·C·T·O·R**

by  
**Lisa  
Borchardt**

## Joining The Union . . .

time, holidays and any other benefits from working for the USPS. The USPS did not just decide to give us these benefits. The APWU fought hard and long to get us to where we are today!

Some people are just too cheap to pay union dues. . . .

This is a tough opinion to battle. There are some career employees who have worked for 30 plus years and never joined the union. Never paid any dues. And yet they still get the benefits that we do. Not all of them though. The union helps with on the job injuries and the Family Medical Leave Act. If you are not a union member, the union does not have to

help you with these situations. The union has events such as picnics, bus trips, Holiday parties and if you are not a union member you do not get to attend these events. Nonmembers also do not get to vote on our contracts!

Joining the APWU is the right thing to do! It is a no brainer for most! I personally have benefitted with many friendships by joining the union. I am thankful that I know someone has my back, just in case!

We often take our rights and benefits for granted, but it is important to remember that without the Union, every employee would be no better off than a fast food worker!

## NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by  
Michael  
O'Hearn

# Get It In Writing

When I teach a basic steward class, I always stress two things. One is getting everything in writing in the grievance procedure. The other is always meet your time limits. I am going to discuss the getting everything in writing, today. It is a very basic principle. When you are dealing with management and even your grievants, you should always get it in writing. To drive home this point, I often buy cookies with the phrase "Get It In Writing" written on the cookies and pass the cookies out to my students. Therefore, let's talk about what you should always get in writing.

First, any time you want an extension of any time limit of the grievance procedure, you must get this in writing. A verbal agreement to extend the time limits is just about useless. If you don't have it in writing, you don't have it. You must have a written agreement to extend the time limits with your signature and the management designee's signature on it or you will soon regret it. I always say that when they send beginning supervisors to their basic training, they must have a class on lying. Management will tell some whopper lies during the grievance process. If you make your extension a verbal extension, I guarantee you management will later claim they never agreed to an extension. Of course, at this time it is too late to meet your time limit. This jeopardizes your grievance. Our contract states that if the union misses a time limit the grievance is waived. This means you have just lost your grievance. Therefore, either get it in writing or file the grievance or move it to the next step in a timely fashion. I cannot stress this enough. Never rely on a verbal extension of the time limits.

Also, any agreement you reach with management must be in writing. For example, if you come to an agreement with management that the grievant is to be paid say \$200, if you don't get that in writing you really don't have it. Later, management will claim they never agreed to this. When you discover management's falsehood, it will most likely be too late to pursue the grievance to the next step in a timely manner. Once again you have lost your grievance. Always, always, always get settlement in writing or you open yourself up to management's dirty tricks.

Another thing in the grievance procedure that you should get in writing is the grievant's statement. I know management will often lie to us, but sometimes our members will also lie to us. I remember once a long time ago, when I was a new steward. We are talking about the stone age. I filed a grievance for a member and during the step 1

discussion, the supervisor informed me that the member told him that I forced the member to file the grievance. He told me that the member did not want to file this grievance. He informed me that



the member would not verify that the actions took place and I had no proof of any violation of the contract. I went back to the member and said you came to me and asked me to file this grievance. Now, management is telling me you don't want it filed. Is this true? The member told me that she panicked. She did tell the supervisor this. I said

OK write me a statement now. She said no I can't do that now. From then on I always get a grievant's statement up front before filing a grievance. If they give me a hard time about writing a

statement, I tell them, "No statement, no grievance." This usually gets them to write a statement.

When requesting documents or information from management always put it in writing and keep a copy of this Request for Information. Put a copy of this written Request for Information in

the case file when you send it up to Step 3. Verbal requests for information are useless. Management will ignore these verbal requests. Once again, get it in writing. Document your Requests for Information. When management does not fill this request from you, you can prove they were not cooperating in the grievance procedure. This will help you win your grievance.

Additionally, always list your documents that you gave to management during the grievance procedure in the moving papers of the grievance. This will help prove that management received these documents. Again, put it in writing. I often see grievances at Step 3 that don't list the documents relied upon to prove the case. This is a bad flaw in a grievance. If you don't do this, management will often claim that they did not get these documents and claim that the union did not prove their case. It is vital that you list your document in writing.

To summarize, in the grievance procedure put everything in writing. Management will often lie while dealing with grievances. To have a successful grievance get everything in writing. If you don't have it in writing, you don't have it.

## Stay Safe!

by Mike Mize, President, MPWU

Are you safe? This is what always to be an easy question. Unfortunately, many of us are not as safe as we think we are. Every day there are Postal Workers that end up injured. Some of our co-workers or you could be the next employee hurt. We could be the next one that doesn't make it home.

The fact is we all become complacent in our everyday activities. We pull instead of push as it is more natural. We rush and do more than one thing at a time as we are busy or shorthanded. We must get the mail out so; safety will have to wait a minute.

Brothers and Sisters, we can't afford to do this any longer. We must follow the proper procedures. We need to be very attentive to the task we are on. We must get the mail out, SAFELY! No one gains from working unsafe. Eventually, someone gets hurt and then we are more shorthanded. When you are injured the paychecks won't flow like normal. An injury can change your life, the lives of your whole family.

Do you get regular Safety Talks? District level Safety sends out regular safety talks. You should get one regularly. When you get a safety talk, how is it provided? I know in many cases if the talk is provided to our Window Clerks or Distribution Clerks the talk is printed out

and left for you to read. This is not proper, District Management has explained that everyone should be involved in the talks, Sortation should stop, and all attention should be on the talk. Questions should be encouraged and discussion



concerning the safety talk should be the norm. This is how District Management expects the talk to occur.

Is there a safety issue in your Office or outside in the parking area? We see major issues at times when we travel. In many cases we step over dangerous things every day. If there is something that is a safety issue in your eyes, then it is an issue. You should discuss the issue with the Postmaster. I know, the Postmaster won't do anything. You can file a 1767 health and safety form on the issue. Make sure to keep a copy for

yourself once it is turned in. If this fails, you should contact the Union. Have your documents ready when you contact us to assist us in correcting the issue.

Bottom line for me, Management in your Office might not care about you, but we do. I want every one of you to go home tonight to your family.

I know this all sounds a bit over the top. But I must tell you it is not. Representing the entire State has provided some knowledge of injuries that I could do without. As an example; Clerk has been working in an AO for 20 years. This Clerk knows the rule about pushing and not pulling, but he is in a hurry. One thing leads to another and the Clerk ends up running the equipment on to their foot. The foot is broken. The Clerk is unable to work as he is on crutches. The claim is delayed, and the Clerk has no sick leave. So, no paycheck until the work comp issue is fixed. The Clerk is out for 6 weeks and returns on restrictions. Now we must fight for work with Management.

Is it worth it? Just think of the suffering your family will go through if you don't make it home. That answers the question. Working safe is worth it. Look around you for what makes it worth it. Mine is a new Grandson! I want to be there to see him grow.

Remember, we are here to help you!! Stay Safe!

## AREA 12 DIRECTOR



by  
Theresa  
Granquist

# CTC The Morale Killer

All custodians under the TL 5 Custodial Team Cleaning (CTC) are supposed to receive 16 hours of training prior to using the CTC system. During the training custodians receive the Custodial Team Cleaning Student Handbook, it is imperative the custodian reads this book and doesn't just rely on the limited information given during training.

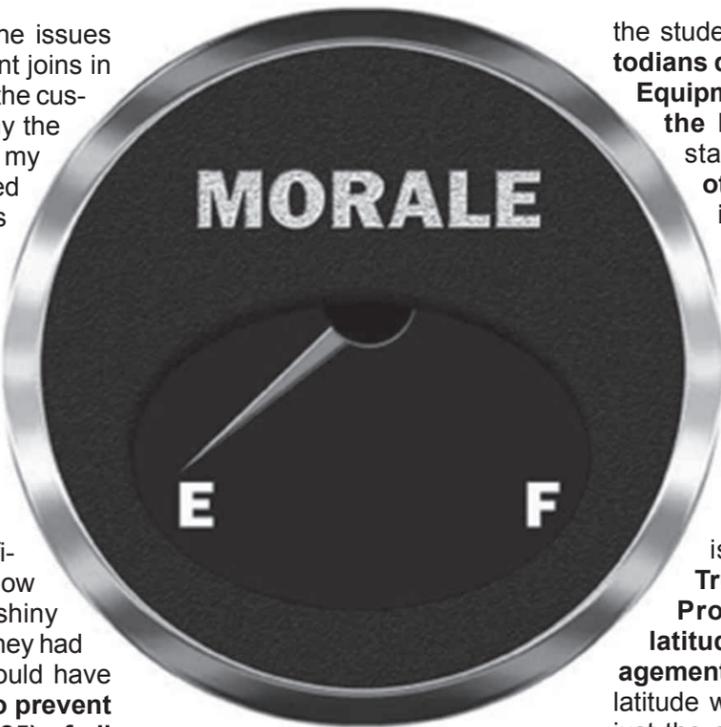
Directly prior to the handbook stating about the 16 hours of training the handbook states, **'The learning never stops with this program'**. Unfortunately, the only thing that never stops is the harassment the custodians get under this program.

During the training the custodians are told they will be treated like professionals and all other employees will clean up after themselves. That is

NOT true and just one of the issues with CTC. Even management joins in with mocking and harassing the custodians because of how filthy the buildings have become, in my office a former supervisor filled the CTC room with trash cans full of recycling and garbage. He was so used to the custodians emptying the trash and disposing of recycling numerous times during a shift that when this stopped, he blamed the custodians, not the management person who stopped the practice.

Another Management Official recently commented on how our workroom floor is not shiny and black, like in the past. If they had read the handbook, they would have known that **'It is possible to prevent approximately 68% (0.8 x 85) of all dirt and debris from entering the facility by proper mats,'**.

What do you think is going to hap-



pen when you rarely wax, never sweep and only vacuum once a week in most areas and then vacuum around Mail Transport Equipment? That's right, in

the student handbook it states **'Custodians do not move Mail Transport Equipment to clean. Clean around the MTE not under it.'** It also states, **'All mail, labels, and other debris under the MPE is the responsibility of the ET or MPE Mechanic to remove.'** The problem with the latter is the ETs in my office did not get the training so they are unaware of this being their work so once again the custodians take it on the chin.

Page 18 of the handbook is **'10 Traits that Define a True Professional... Item III... Professionals are provided latitude in their daily self-management'**. Custodians are not given latitude with this system; in fact, it is just the opposite, that is why it is so important for everyone to read the handbook and understand the limitations put on the custodians. We need to band together and support each other.

## The Consequences Of Trying To Please Everyone

by Tony Carobine

An old man, a boy and a donkey were going to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked. As they went along they passed some people who remarked it was a shame the old man was walking and the boy was riding. The man and the boy thought maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions. Later they passed some people that remarked, "what a shame, he makes the little boy walk." They decided they both would walk! Soon they passed some more people who thought they were stupid to walk when they had a decent donkey to ride. So, they both rode the donkey! Now they passed some people that shamed them saying how awful to put such a load on a poor donkey.

The boy and man said they were probably right so they decided to carry the donkey. As they crossed a bridge, they lost their grip on the animal and he fell into the river and drowned.

The moral of the story? . . . If you try to please everyone, you will eventually lose your ass.

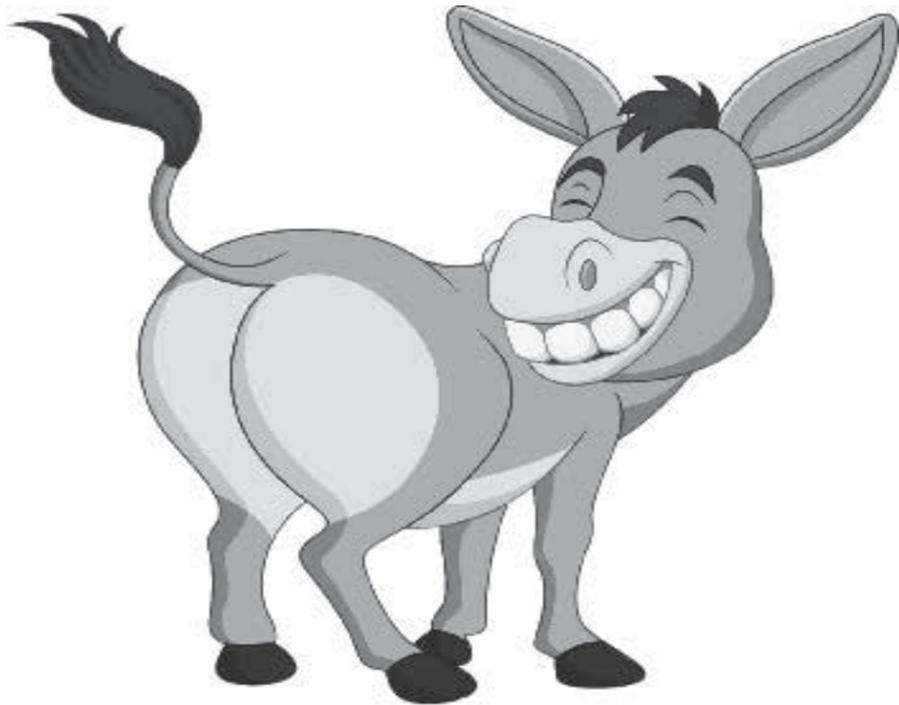
In some ways, this fable is not unlike the situation occasionally faced by editors. We sometimes have to make tough decisions in the course of our duties that will be condemned or ridiculed by others, but appropriate if our own integrity and credibility and that of the publication are to be upheld. While we may not be able to please everyone, there are some things that can be done to demonstrate a commitment of maintaining a publication of the highest ethical quality and honesty.

Anyone who undertakes the job of editor shoulders an important responsibility. In their quest to communicate with the membership, editors (and their associates) perform a variety of tasks; including: writer, copy editor, photographer, typesetter, printer, labeler, and administrator, to name a few.

The physical production of a paper is only part of an editor's responsibility, however. He or she must not only develop a knowledge about the "mechanics" of publishing, but also be familiar with various laws that affect a union publication; such as libel, copyright, internal union election laws and federal election regulations. And, as caretaker of the "voice of the union," an editor must be fair and impartial to ensure the paper is serving all members.

One way an editor can maintain an atmosphere of fairness and credibility (plus avoid a lot of personal aggravation) is by instituting, with membership approval, various policies or constitutional language involving the union publication.

The most notable is an Editorial Policy governing the type of material that will or will not be accepted. The importance of an Editorial Policy and Editorial Policy Committee cannot be emphasized enough. Sooner or later material will be submitted for the paper that is questionable. Absent an Editorial Policy or Editorial Policy Committee, it makes the job of editor much more difficult. As a result this often leads to unnecessary turmoil and perhaps the editor's credibility being called into question. Conversely, with an Editorial Policy and Editorial Policy



Committee previously approved by the membership, the editor not only has a procedure to rely upon, but direction as to how the situation should be handled.

An editor's job description in the organization's constitution, defining the editor's duties and responsibilities is another area that should be addressed. By doing so everyone in the organization will have an understanding of what the editor's position entails. This is yet another way to avoid future conflict that can work to harm the editor, publication and the union.

These two areas regarding the administration of local or state publications repeatedly cause the most conten-

tion. When you think about it, we have enough problems with the forces out to destroy our livelihood. We don't need conflict between each other. Taking the time to set procedures in place that can avoid such conflict is time well spent.

The moral of this story? It's not possible to always please everyone when making decisions regarding the administration of a union publication. However, ensuring there are procedures in place to address such matters will go a long way in maintaining your integrity as an editor and the credibility of the publication. Anything less and we are not serving the best interests of the owners of the union publication — the membership!

— Postal Press Newsletter

# Labor Day 2019

Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers, and Labor Day 2019 occurs on Monday, September 2 (it's traditionally observed on the first Monday in September). It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894. Labor Day also symbolizes the end of summer for many Americans, and is celebrated with parties, parades and athletic events.

Labor Day, an annual celebration of workers and their achievements, originated during one of American labor history's most dismal chapters.

In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to eke out a basic living. Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as 5 or 6 toiled in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages.

People of all ages, particularly the very poor and recent immigrants, of-

ten faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks.

As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture as the well-spring of American employment, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th century, grew more

prominent and vocal. They began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay.

Many of these events turned violent during this period, including the infamous Haymarket Riot of 1886, in which several Chicago policemen and workers were killed. Others gave rise to longstanding traditions: On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, holding the first Labor Day parade in U.S. history.

The idea of a "workingmen's holiday," celebrated on the first Monday in September, caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress

would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives.

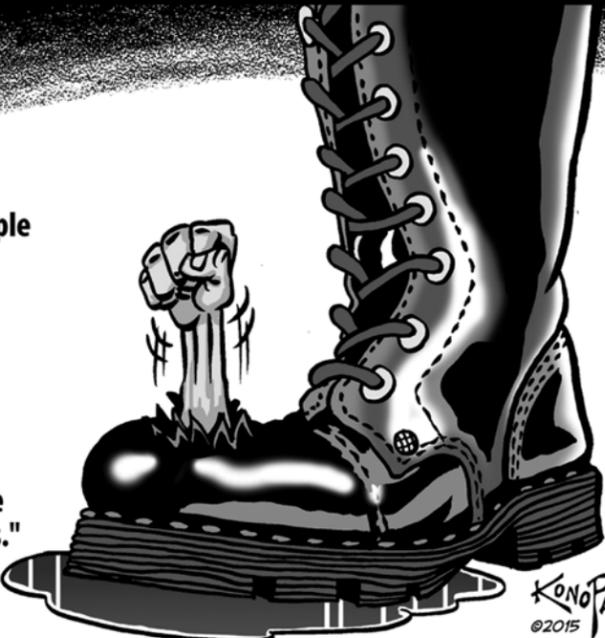
On June 26, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide. To break the strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers.

In the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. More than a century later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified.

Many credit Peter J. McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday.

Labor Day is still celebrated in cities and towns across the United States with parades, picnics, barbecues, fireworks displays and other public gatherings. For many Americans, particularly children and young adults, it represents the end of the summer and the start of the back-to-school season.

## FIGHT BACK ON LABOR DAY



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**"Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, ..."**

**The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."**

**- Frederick Douglass**

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## The Fix May Be In

*continued from page 2*  
 vide real wage increases; improve infrastructure and so on. All of these things will certainly improve conditions for those still working on their career. Thus, there is a lot riding on this bill.

tor what's going on in Congress, as it appears that this will be one more attempt to fix the Postal Service's financial situation. It also appears that any fix addressing the prefunding of retiree's health benefits may come with the requirement of mandated Medicare B for retired Postal Workers. I urge you to stay tuned and stay involved. — *The Communicator*

Therefore, we all, working or retired, must continue to moni-

# — DEADLINE —

for articles for the next issue  
 of the *Michigan Messenger*  
 is October 4, 2019