

# Michigan MESSENGER



Volume 48, Number 204  
November-December, 2019

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

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## PRESIDENT



by  
**Michael  
Mize**

# Disappearing Act

This is what Management does with our Clerk jobs and hours. Management likes to play a little game that if you didn't earn the hours then you don't need them. By their rules you could have an office that is open 50 hours a week and only earns 48 so you can't have the 50. The games they play with numbers to try to show they don't need a position is simply staggering. This hatchet style Management doesn't work. Employees end up suffering from long hours, trouble getting time off, stress, fatigue and so much more. We must use this language to fight this battle.

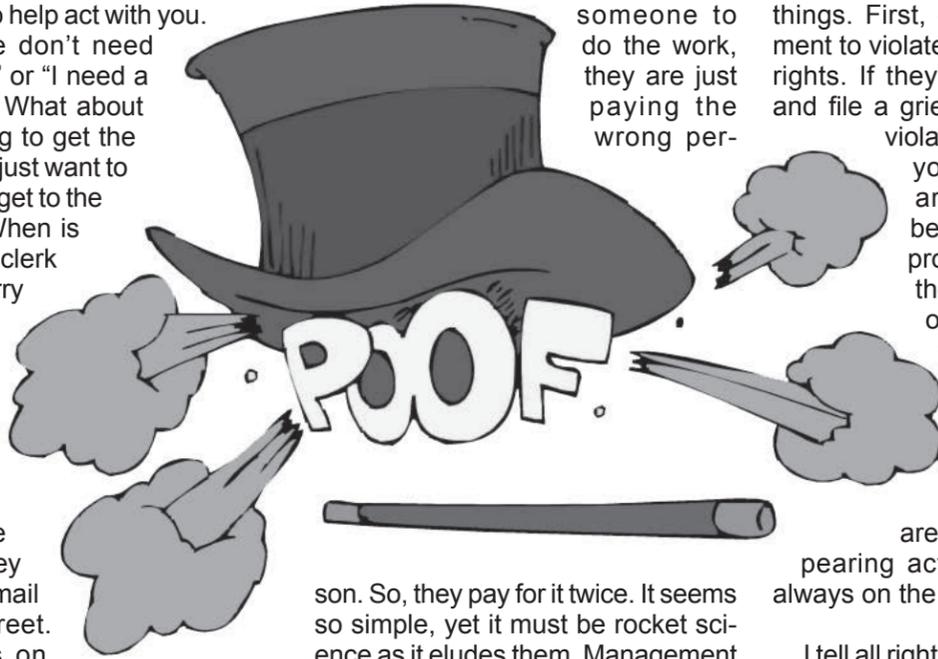
We have some great tools at our disposal in article 37. One of the big ones is that every effort will be made to create desirable duty assignments from all available work hours for career employees to bid. Our contract speaks of work hours not earned.

Look around your offices. Is Management doing work that they are not

supposed to do? File on it!! They played the disappearing act game with positions and the hours and now they play the just trying to help act with you. Play your "We don't need your help card" or "I need a steward card"! What about Carriers helping to get the mail out? They just want to get it done and get to the street, right? When is the last time a clerk was sent to carry mail? They have a job and we have a job. Carriers should not be doing our work in the office. When we get it done, they can have the mail and hit the street. This failure is on Management.

This disappearing act is a clear lack of ability of Management to do the most important job they have. Their most important job is staffing and scheduling. They continue to cut away at these while

violating the contract and spending money on grievance settlements. In many cases they are paying someone to do the work, they are just paying the wrong per-



son. So, they pay for it twice. It seems so simple, yet it must be rocket science as it eludes them. Management budgets for less hours than they have in employees. Why? If you need to save money you just take it out of the budget. Then a Manager violates the Contract to try to make budget and they reduce the hours. Then the budget gets cut further the next year.

The hours just disappeared.

What can you do to help? Couple things. First, do not allow Management to violate our Contract and your rights. If they do ask for a steward and file a grievance. Many of these violations are only seen by you in the office as we are not there. Second, be certain you are on the proper operations. When there are no hours for an operation then the Management bean counters determine no hours are needed. If we work, one operation and record the hours somewhere else we are assisting in the disappearing act. Make sure you are always on the proper operation.

I tell all right now; I am sick and tired of the Management disappearing act and games. We need to work together to fight against this Disappearing Act. If we don't work together the next person or office in the box could be you.

In Unity.

Happy  
Holidays

Here's wishing you and  
yours a very  
Happy Holiday and a  
Prosperous New Year!

The Officers of the  
Michigan Postal Workers Union

EDITOR

# A PSE Is A PSE



by  
**John  
Greathouse**

is bringing in for the holidays under the guise of "Holiday PSE." how management is doing it.

Well as pretentious as that sound, there is no such animal! A PSE is a PSE! While yes, they were being brought onboard for the heavy volumes of mail with the intent of cutting them loose in late December or early January. Remember, it is all based on seniority for them, just keep an eye on

Also, please help them along as they do their jobs so they can learn what they need to know to do a good job for our customers.

I hope everyone has a Wonderful Holidays and try and stay warm!

In Solidarity.

Brothers and Sisters. As we head into the Holidays, things are going to be getting much, much crazier!

Most of the plant will be getting flooded with PSE's that management

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

# On With Your Update



by  
**Roscoe  
Woods**

Right to Work Bills that have been sweeping the nation.

As reported at VOX.com "The Democrats' new labor reform bill does several things, but the goal is to cut down on the bureaucracy that's involved when workers try to form labor

the National Labor Relations Act. There are few things businesses hate more than the idea of a jury awarding millions of dollars to an aggrieved employee. That threat gives employers a strong incentive to follow the law."

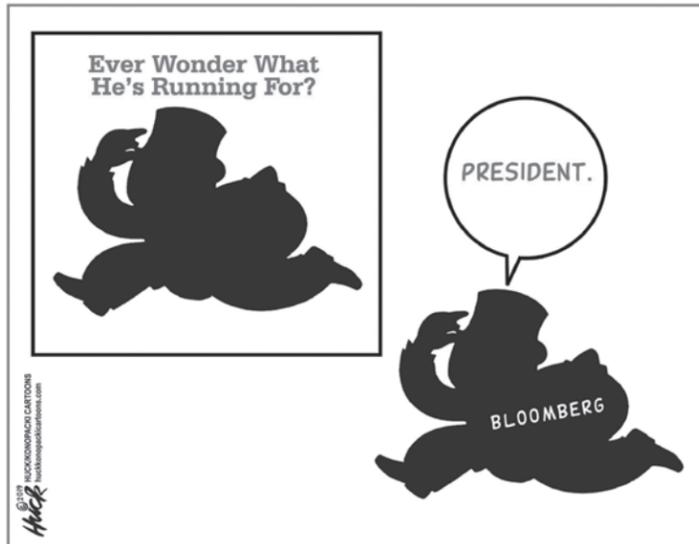
A review done by President Mize and me shows that once again the entire Democratic side of the Michigan Congressional delegation is on record sponsoring this bill, and again the entire GOP side in the House here in Michigan is arrayed against it. Rest assured the Senate will stonewall it like so many others and working people wanting to organize all across this nation will continue to wait for the support bills like this provide all the while watching GOP led chambers across our nation pressing forward with Right To Work

Bills that make it that much harder to seek and get justice in your work place.

As the Trump presidency continues the attack on workers does as well. Regardless of your political bent I hope you do realize the danger the far right GOP establishment presents to the USPS and our ability to maintain our presence as a Union as well as our abilities to bargain for our wages and working conditions.

For now with the Dems securing the House we have gotten a reprieve from the calls to privatize us into the dust bin of history. But we must remain vigilant and even when you expect some GOP House Reps to understand the importance of this agency in the American fabric at this point every GOP member here in Michigan seems to be following Trumps lead lest they get a bad tweet out of him.

President Mize and yours truly will keep watch and we wish all of you a joyous holiday season. Stay Tuned and follow the APWU Legislative priorities at <https://apwu.org/legislative-and-political>



If we are keeping score there are at least 400 pieces of legislation that have cleared the House that have both a Democrat and Republican sponsors sitting on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's desk waiting for action in the Senate.

It is curious why McConnell refuses to allow floor vote on many but at the end of the day we expect these bills will die in the Senate as it is has become the bi-partisan graveyard for most issues than do pass the house with support from both parties.

We presume Mitch is trying to protect the GOP side from itself as well as his seat safe by not pissing off his big donors. There can be only two reasons not to bring these bills forward for debate and vote.

1 - Several of the more moderate bills addressing background checks for firearm purchases, fixes in the ACA, more moderate budget issues may just pass and Mitch is afraid to lose the dark money so he will not allow a vote.

2- The Senate would vote down most if not all bi-partisan bills including several that make sense to most if not all voters and as such he is protecting the Senate majority from being honest with their constituents.

Either way Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell is the Grim Reaper if Legislation and hundreds of bills coming from the House collect dust in the Senate. I guess my point is, if someone tells you the House is doing nothing, before you just assume its true Google it.

One bill sure to die in the Senate is the PRO Act or as it is called: The Protecting the Right to Organize Act. This Bill is a push back against the myriad

unions, and to penalize companies that try to stop them. For example, it would bar businesses from making employees attend meetings to discourage them from joining a union, and would require both sides to quickly mediate disputes that often stall unionizing and contract negotiations (the current fight between Volkswagen and its factory workers in Tennessee is a good example). The bill would also let the National Labor Relations Board hit companies with monetary penalties each time they fire someone for lawfully unionizing. Right now, companies just have to pay back wages to the employee and give them back their job if the board finds them at fault. Without penalties, companies have few incentives to follow the law. And instead of leaving fired workers unemployed as they wait for their case to be heard, the bill would require businesses to immediately reinstate these employees while their case is pending. And they would no longer be able to fire employees who go on strike, which is currently legal in some cases.

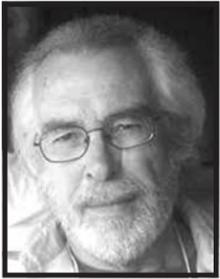
Most importantly, though, the bill would allow workers to sue their bosses for violating their right to organize under



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RETIREE PRESIDENT



by Paul Browning

# Retiree Conference And APWU Election Aftermath

In the wake of the very recent somewhat divisive APWU National elections – which hardly anybody seemed to care about – our Union held its biennial All Crafts/Retiree Conference in Lost Wages (oops, sorry. Make that Las Vegas) Nevada during the last week of October. Its a teaching, come together affair which this year was followed by the newly elected Officers Installation Dinner although barely a handful of officers were “new”. As a retiree, I attended four days of APWU Retiree classes and meetings.

Much like the National Union elections, the meetings were not without controversy and even some delegates split into factions over issues. Resolutions were proposed by retirees for the 2020 APWU National Convention. Essentially, the resolutions were split into three different categories. They were #1 - Increasing Retiree members representation on the Convention Floor. (If you haven't been paying attention to the fact that Retiree Department members only get five (5) votes out of the 2,500 delegates at a Convention, you can skip this next part but don't go away as there is more stuff that could affect you) Full dues paying members are allocated representation on basically a 1 for 25 member ratio. Retiree delegates in Las Vegas approved a resolution that would give them a 1-100 member ration. The resolution is intended as a compromise for our \$36 a year dues. As retirees have only one (1) full time officer versus almost seventy in Washington and the field for full dues members and still contribute to the APWU General Fund, it seems reasonable. I personally as one of the five Retiree Delegates just want to be able to speak on retiree issues and stand and vote with my fellow delegates from Michigan at a Convention.

The #2 issue was increasing Retiree member dues to either \$48 or \$60 a year. Now some Retiree Chapters hold lavish dinners and meetings for their members. Nothing wrong with them doing so. What we do as a State Chapter in Michigan is hold Retiree State Conventions and Educational Assemblies for our members. Its a costly business

also but its the only opportunity for us to reach out to members all over Michigan as the locations are moved around the State. We are frugal with our dues rebate from the National Union and spend the money like it comes from our own pocket. So we

on by ALL delegates (including full dues/still working members) with the results binding.

The #3 issue had to do with making it easier for retirees within a state to form a Retiree Chapter. Current

e.g. North Dakota, Montana, etc.

So the Conference ended with the only the Convention representation resolution passed and at this point, it's only a recommendation. Nothing concrete will happen concerning it or other resolutions until the 2020 National Convention. I spoke numerous times in front of the 200 delegates either for or against the resolutions and personally was in agreement with all of the final outcomes. Now its wait and see what debates and votes happen by Convention delegates in 2020.

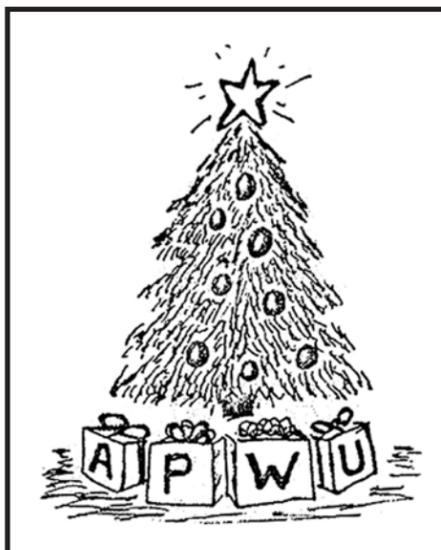
Finally, a few words about Unity and APWU Membership action-out of almost 200,000 still working and retired APWU members, we have seen the vast majority look no further than to the day they get paid when it comes to the USPS and their Union.

Whether achieving a “good” Contract or enforcement of that Contract or maintaining Retirement benefits or forming the so-called Grand Alliance, the overwhelming response has been a “not my job” mentality. Shame on those members who can't see past the end of their noses and praise for those who fight the often lonely, often thankless battle for their fellow Union Brothers and Sisters. Thank God for the activists, no matter what their opinions, who have the courage to speak up and work for the American Postal Workers Union. My heartfelt appreciation to all of them, from the Washington D.C. officers to the local stewards on the workroom floor, all those in between, and the retired members who answer the call for political action.



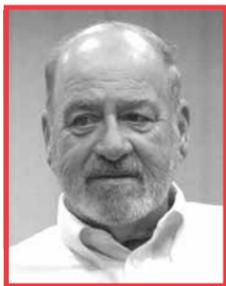
are doing ok money wise for the time being. Back to those other Chapters with money problems – a means could exist whereby they could raise dues ONLY for their Chapters. If they need it, let them get THEIR membership to approve it. Also, another reason for a proposed dues increase as organizing more retirees to become members in the APWU. As I received an email from APWU Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell prior to the Conference that there were over six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) in the National Retiree Organizing Fund, I could only view such a reason as ludicrous. At any rate, retiree delegates voted down any dues increase resolution but it will no doubt be introduced again in 2020 at the National APWU Convention when such resolutions are voted

requirement to form a State Chapter is that there must be at least three (3) Local Retiree Chapters within a State. In Michigan we have approximately 1,450 retiree members divided into five (5) Local Chapters and the State Chapter for a total of six Chapters. It takes ten (10) members to form a Chapter. Under the proposed resolution ten members could form a State Chapter where no Local Chapter existed and if there were seven or eight hundred (700 or 800) other retirees in that State, then the ten members would receive all the rebate money of over \$1,000 a month. Such a situation seems fraught with the possibility of abuse and lack of accountability. This resolution was referred to the APWU National Executive Board for action or modification depending upon a State's relatively small population



**— DEADLINE —**  
for articles for the next issue  
of the *Michigan Messenger*  
is January 17, 2020

**M.P.W.U. RETIREE ADVISOR**



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

# A View From The Mitt

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

**WHEW!** These past 6 months have been intense with the APWU national officer election campaigns, USPS’s concentrated “Dear Postal Retiree” newsletter mailings to undermine our FEHBP benefits with their selling job for Medicare Integration, concluding with the APWU All-Craft Retirees’ Dept. Conference. Within these events; startling internal revelations, candidate’s wooing retiree members for votes, controversial candidate endorsements, 3 Facebook sites where both candidates and members debated the merits of their positions which provided a forum to highlight Retiree Involvement initiatives as never before, as if we had our own microphone. Post-election fallout, then right into the All-Craft Conferences in Vegas, revealing yet more internal issues to be addressed and resolved. All the while, critical proposed legislation continues to languish in Congress. These whirlwind events, one after another, some on top of the other, are history; but the resulting fallout from each are staring us in the face in the coming months. “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.” (Yogi Berra)

**National Officer Election Results:** 6-1. Joining with Brothers Paul Browning and Byron Denton (CA), we issued our endorsement of the 7 national officer positions retired members were eligible to vote for, dubbing us “The Three Amigos”. 5 were incumbents re-elected, 1 new officer, but unsuccessful in electing **Brother John L. Marcotte** to the top spot who **laid it all on the line for us!** Post-election eulogies speculate that the fourth candidate for president all but ensured the re-election of the incumbent. John was the **only candidate for president** not yet eligible to retire, who would return to the workroom floor. Bro. Marcotte vacated his position as Director, APWU Health Plan where he was virtually a shoo-in for re-election. John laid it all on the line **for us!** John Louis Marcotte has been an unwavering, vocal advocate for Retiree Involvement from Day #1, and how did we Retirees’ Dept. voting members reward him? An anemic 32.2% ballot return despite every effort to get out the vote. I could say that exceeds the 21% ballot return of the active membership, but they’re both dismal. The minority governing the majority, not the kind of democracy the concept of “one member-one vote” referendum balloting was intended. Of course, we’re pleased our other 6 endorsed candidates were successful, including new APWU Health Plan Dir., Sarah Jean Rodriguez, with whom I intend to present some issues Health Plan members experience out in the hinterlands, which we’ve already briefly discussed, once she is settled in.

Retirees’ Dept. Dir. Nancy Olumekor was re-elected by the slimmest of margins; 67 votes! Every vote counts. So, the \$64. question? **Did YOU Vote?** If Yes; Thank You! If No; Why Not?

**Startling Revelations:** Did you know that the Retirees’ Dept. is carrying about 6,000 “cash-pay” dues delinquent retiree members, some owing as much as 5 years back dues, including those enrolled in the APWU Health Plan? I could write an entire column on this issue alone! Preliminary election Retiree Dept. membership numbers released were; 41,850. But retiree ballots mailed numbered 32,271, a glaring **more than 9,000-member swing!** Further info came out that the last L-M Report showed 38,000+ members, rendering it down to the 6K+ cash dues-pay delinquents. We’ve addressed this in detail with recommendations to “clean it up” with Dir. Olumekor, and Sec.-Treas, Powell, with assurances by yours truly that we will continue to pursue immediate measures to ensure accurate accounting of Retirees’ Dept. members in each of several categories. It leaves one questioning how many eligible retiree voters didn’t receive a ballot? Highly likely since reports of ineligible retirees receiving a ballot. Too many glitches to overlook! Numerous concerns over contracting the American Arbitration Assn. (AAA), after their reportedly less than sterling track record conducting Union elections, including the last APWU election.

**Then, there’s the money!** The APWU Retirees’ Dept. **Organizing Fund** earmarked to be used solely by and for organizing new members and Local Retiree Chapters. Since the organizing fund was established, keen-eyed ‘bean counters’ using Sec.-Treas. Dept’s own figures; show well over \$600K deposited. Repeated requests for accounting of those monies have been met with some resistance via ‘no reply’, or numbers that don’t add up. The latest figure is somewhere around \$300K+ in the fund. There’s no allegations of misuse, just a troubling lack of comprehensive accountability of funds received, expended, and true balance. Shoddy accounting of retiree membership and organizing funds. Questions of why there’s been no known significant use of that resource to organize unorganized retired members or Chapters? Vague answers have resulted in more questions. We’re determined to continue to require transparent accountability left in shambles by what appears to be years of just plain neglect, intended, or not!

**Las Vegas Retirees’ Dept. Conference:** So as not to step on State Chapter president, and Central Region Delegate, Paul Browning’s recounting of the conference, I’ll stick to several further hot-button items that surfaced, but not before expressing sincere gratitude that delegate wisdom prevailed by determining the **paramount retiree Representation resolution with a 1-100 Retiree Chap-**

**ter delegate-to-member ratio,** going into the 2020 National Convention. Two proposed resolutions offered by Eastern Region Delegate and Pittsburgh Chapter president, John Richards; to increase retiree dues \$1. and \$2. (which would have **doubled** the basic \$24. annual dues), were rejected, but not without some support. A frivolous resolution proposed to rebate 75% dues back to Chapters got little traction, thankfully. I’m given to understand there was considerable eye-opening discussion from the floor mic’s on the aforementioned numbers discrepancies.

**Proposed Solutions:** As a proponent of; “if you can criticize something, be prepared to offer a solution, not that you’re just opposed to it”, I’ve offered some solutions to be considered, yet to be acknowledged by national officer recipients. On the question of a never popular dues increase; I’m well aware most Local Chapters operate on a thin margin, as do some State Chapters. A dues increase that would be rebated 100% to Chapters to ‘sweeten the pot’, while MAL retiree dues is injected 100% into the APWU general fund coffers, may be tempting, but counter-productive at this time. Too many irons in the fire to resolve first. To those Chapter leaders who support a resolution(s) to increase their revenue I strongly suggest they go back to their home Local or State Chapter, propose a Chapters due increase to their own members by justifying the need for additional operating funds, and vote on it. **Do not** impose a dues increase on My/Our Member’s by enlisting and hiding behind a Convention resolution to increase dues with a “cash back” sweetener across the board, **Do Not!** 5 National Retiree Delegates (actually 4) and a handful of retiree delegates among some 2,500 active delegates voting on increasing retiree members dues is no skin off their nose! That’s like taking a knife to a gun fight! The time will come to rationally consider an across the board nominal dues increase, but there’s nothing that says it has to be round dollars. Say maybe; .50 cents? Even at the bottom 32,271 number of members (who knows for sure?), that’s still a lot of ‘cents’. A dues increase in any amount isn’t conducive to an ongoing concerted effort to reinstate dues delinquent cash-pay members. In that regard, I also proposed to forgive/waiver back dues owed by those delinquent cash-pay members **IF** they return a completed Retiree Dues Deduction Authorization Form 1187 for \$3. from their monthly annuity. Unanswered is the burning question; ‘Do these 6K dues delinquent members continue to receive the **APWU Postal Worker** magazine and Union mailings?’ Unless deceased or incapacitated, and we know there’s some, one would expect cash-pay members know they’re in arrears.

An issue raised during the Conference is the 3 organized Local Retiree Chapter requirement for states petition-

ing to organize a State Retiree Chapter. The original purpose for the 3 Local Chapter requirement was; **1.** An incentive to organize Local Chapters, and; **2.** Protect the integrity of the distribution of dues rebates. No free lunches. Earn it! We did! Granted; there are less populated states like DE and northern tier of some mid-west and western states where the 3 Local Chapter requirement cannot be met. (For instance; MT has 6 people per sq. mile, while CA has 248 per sq. mile). I’ve offered a solution to that proposing a panel consisting of the Retirees’ Dept. Dir., Sec.-Treas., and Human Relations Dir., **not the NEB,** receive states petitioning for a charter and relief from the 3 Local Chapter requirement to first; determine the number of retiree members in Locals, then the state MAL’s a.k.a. Unrepresented. If determined a waiver is warranted based on population demographics, approve either 2 organized Local Chapters, but no less than one. There’s bound to be copious debate ahead on the subject. While it’s my view that those states with **legitimate** requests for a reduced requirement, those petitions be accommodated with full, fair, and careful consideration.

**Coming Attractions:** \*\*Be assured we’ll keep our eye on USPS’s concerted effort to bypass normal methods for discussing changes to retiree/employee benefits; i.e. FEHBP, with the exclusive postal Unions, with their end run via “Dear Postal Retiree” ‘love letters’, going directly to ALL postal retirees home mailbox. WE, APWU at least, are not asleep at the wheel.

\*\*Understand; the issues outlined in this column are not as much about finger-pointing as it is; we recognize areas of administration needing prompt attention and willing to engage to get it done for the benefit of our retiree membership, to continue to make a more perfect Dept. and Union. Admittedly for the sake of transparency and info, not only the members having a right to know, but to communicate these views wherever the **Messenger** goes and hopefully read.

\*\*We’ve only scratched the surface of subjects, proposals, and issues brought to the fore during the election campaigns, election process, and All-Craft Retirees’ Dept. Conference. As we go through the next 8-9 months before the 2022 National Convention, I plan to address these and several other thought-provoking items; i.e. Resolutions (not exclusively retiree related) to require members of the NEB are enrolled in the APWU Health Plan to be eligible to serve on the Plan Board of Directors. Another; to reinstate the position of Asst. Dir. Legislative/Political Dept.

\*\*Both long-serving NEB officers and candidates for national office expressed wondering “why” the 5 National Retiree Delegates are not being utilized as “Representatives” in their respective Regions.

*continued on page 5*

## VETERANS' DIRECTOR

## Veteran News



by  
John P.  
Smeekens

## GET READY

Starting Jan. 1, all service-connected disabled veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war and primary veteran caregivers will be eligible to shop at **commissaries** and exchanges, and presently, officials from three federal agencies, are preparing the way. The newly eligible customers will also be able to use certain M.W.R. activities. It's the largest patronage expansion in more than 60 years. The departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security have been planning for the expansion for more than six months, with four teams totaling about 70 people. Among other things, they've decided how the new customers will get access to military installations and to the stores; assessed the impact on the stores and have been making plans to ensure enough products get to the shelves in the right assortment.

The fiscal 2019 National Defense Authorization Act expanded the pool of eligible shoppers. Because **the expansion also applies to Coast Guard facilities**, the Department of Homeland Security has been involved. The law also included Medal of Honor recipients, but they already had shopping privileges. Previously, veterans with 100 percent service-connected disabilities were able to shop; now all, with service-connected disabilities, can shop. The benefit extends to MWR programs that are "revenue-generating facilities," according to the law. The expansion is about a 50 percent increase in customers. Currently, about 6 million total households are eligible for the benefit; this will add about 3 million more customers. Officials have been mapping out the areas, using VA statistics, where there may be more of an impact on the stores. The impact assessments generally show there will be a low to moderate impact on military stores overall. These new shoppers generally don't have access to military bases. Officials have decided the best form of identification for these groups:

**Disabled and other eligible veterans:** For access into the installation, and for access to the stores, they'll use the veterans' health ID card. Officials are working to enable technology at the front gate to scan those veteran cards and will start scanning the cards in October. Commissary officials are working on adjusting their technology to enable systems to read the veterans' health ID card. **Caregivers:** The process will be different, initially. The benefit applies to the primary caregiver of wounded/injured veterans who are registered in the Department

of Veterans Affairs caregiver program. Beginning in October, the VA will post a memo to **VA.gov** for caregivers, to be used for access at the front gate, along with driver's license or other authorized form of ID. The VA process will later transition to a caregiver-type ID card, which will have scanning swipe capability.

These new customers will pay a fee for using a credit card at commissaries, except for the military resale system's Military Star card. The amount of the fee has not yet been determined. By law, this expansion can't include extra costs associated with using credit cards in commissaries; the cost must be passed on to the customer. Except for the Military Star card, credit card companies charge transaction fees to retailers when customers use their credit cards.

There will be a flag built into the system at commissaries so that when the card is swiped the fee will be charged. The fee applies only to new patrons using credit cards in commissaries, not to Medal of Honor recipients or others who were previously authorized to shop. New customers can avoid the fees by paying by cash, check or using the Military Star card. It only applies at the commissary, which is funded primarily by taxpayer dollars.

## VA WELCOME KIT

Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors know that VA has no shortage of technical handouts, benefits books and informational materials. Even with all these resources, Veterans ask, "Where do I start?"

Whether a Veteran is just getting out of the service or hung up the uniform years ago, the VA Welcome Kit can help guide them to the benefits and services they earned.

No matter where in life they might be, the VA welcome kit will help Veterans navigate VA. Veterans can understand the process and their re-

sponsibilities, and get started using the benefits promised by a grateful nation.

In addition to a broad overview of services VA offers; this guide contains:

#1 A map of the benefits and resources available at specific moments in your journey,

#2 Contact information for each of VA's programs,

#3 Checklists to ensure you gather the right documents, forms and information needed,

#4 Quick start guides so that you hit the ground running with your benefits.

**The kit is available for download or print on VA.gov.**

The Veterans Experience Office created the kit using human-centered design principles, including feedback from more than 150 Veterans throughout the country. VEO continually updates the guide based on additional feedback and information.

While the welcome kit does not provide all of the technical information on VA's programs included in the Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors handbook, it does provide a summary and the steps required to enroll in VA services.

Please visit **VA.gov** to download or print a **VA Welcome Kit**, and feel free to share this guide with friends and family who might also need help with their benefits.

## COLA RAISE

Recently the president signed the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019* into law. The new law provides cost of living increases equal to the same increase granted for Social Security benefits. The increase will be for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, and dependency and

indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children. These increases will take effect on Dec. 1, 2019. I heard it's a 1.6% increase!!!

## KLEENEX TIME

The remains of a Michigan soldier who went missing during the Korean War's fierce Battle of Chosin Reservoir are being returned home after DNA testing confirmed that he died in that battle nearly 70 years ago.

U.S. Army **Sgt. David Alexander Feriend** was 23 in December 1950 when he was listed as missing in action, after the brutal 17-day siege near the Chosin Reservoir in eastern North Korea.

Feriend's remains were among 55 boxes of human remains that North Korea turned over to the U.S. after a June 2018 summit in Singapore between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced in August that Feriend had been "accounted for." DNA testing verified that the remains in box number 36 were those of Feriend. Feriend's sister, Irene Arbogast, said her parents had hoped for years that he was a prisoner of war. Shortly after the conclusion of World War II, Feriend enlisted in the Army, but soon returned home to Fife Lake south of Traverse City. Jobs were scarce, and he did not want to be a burden to his struggling family, so Feriend re-enlisted and was deployed to Korea at the start of that war. He was a sergeant assigned to an infantry unit. The Army disclosed the possible scenarios that lead to his death. The most likely is that a bomb struck a transport he was driving during the siege at Chosin, carrying injured soldiers to safety.

Feriend will receive full military honors when his remains arrive at Gerald R. Ford International Airport near Grand Rapids. Patriot Riders and the Michigan State Police are expected to accompany his remains to a Traverse City-area funeral home.

*continued on page 8*

## A View From The Mitt

*continued from page 4*

Hey! **I know the answer to that!** Goes back to March, 1996. I was there! Answer coming in a future column.

\*\*Curious proposals to permit USPS supervisors who retired as dues-paying APWU members, some to carry the Health Plan, to belong a Local Retiree Chapter. Sure! As long as they have no voice or vote, and ineligible to hold office. They made the choice to go over to the other side even if it was to boost their high-3. No Chapter should be that desperate for revenue to forsake principle. There's NARFE for non-bargaining unit retirees, and for \$35. per year they can

be Associate Members of our Plan.

(Sources: P. Browning, Chapter delegates, phone, e-mails & virtual miles of Facebook posts).

**FEHB Open Season:** If you're satisfied with what you have, keep it. Do nothing. To be clear; **I do not sell insurance of any kind.** That's strictly a personal choice. I am, however, a satisfied Medicare recipient, and enrolled in the APWU Health Plan. There was a period when I had no choice but to enroll in BC/BS in our rural northern county due to the absence of FEHBP providers, until becoming Medicare eligible and the Plan became our secondary insurer. Another

hot-button subject I'll be discussing with our new Plan director. **FYI:** APWU Health Plan (Non-postal) retiree monthly premiums **went down**; High Option Self Only: **\$215.38-\$12.12**. Self & Family: **\$558.89-\$45.83**. Self+One: **\$432.77-\$25.67**. By comparison, BC/BS Standard **went up**; Self Only: **\$253.30+\$10.13**. Self & Family: **\$621.27+\$40.14**. Self+One: **\$1,092.28+\$23.00**, (Source: narfe Nov. 2019). Comparable coverage. Do the math.

**Our Christmas Card:** A Very Merry & Blessed Christmas (And religious or ethnic holidays observed), and A Happy & Healthy 2020. *Al & Michelle*. Solidarity Forever!

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by James Stevenson

Challenge Improper Details (The Phantom Job)

We have all seen it. Those "special" employees who have been missing from their bid assignments for months and yes sometimes years. Some have been missing from their bid assignment

for so long that many employees did not even realize that the missing employee even had a bid assignment. These employees often times were "hand-picked" by management and "tucked" away in a non-existent job that was never posted for bid or worse yet allowed to be detailed outside of their bid assignment to a position or section which has previously reverted positions, abolished positions, or

exceeded employees. Although you may not win any popularity contests with management or the employee receiving the improper detail the actions must be challenged as they could possibly violate the principles of seniority, bidding, and utilizing all hours under Article 37 to create duty assignments.

Example: James Stevenson is an

automation clerk on Tour 3 who has been given a detail to a non-existent position on Tour II as a General Clerk, a secretary or a "special assistant" to the MDO. Remember a detail as defined by the EL-312 as "the temporary assignment of an employee to an established duty assignment to which the incumbent is absent." If the detail job was never posted for bid and there does not exist an incumbent employee who is absent from that position then the job should be posted for bid. James Stevenson has 3 years seniority and Bob Gunter has 25 years seniority as a clerk at the "DO AS WE PLEASE PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER." If James Stevenson is given a job which would have gone to Bob Gunter had it been properly posted then it violates the principles of seniority. Improper details are often nothing short of an "end run" around the proper posting and bidding of jobs.

I have attached a copy of a Step 3 Direct Area Grievance I filed when management wanted to create "Phantom Details" by improperly allowing Mail Processing Clerks to work as SSDA's. The actions were extremely egregious as the USPS had reverted over 30 SSDA jobs in that section. Rather than properly post the positions for bid the employer came up with "Phantom Details." Allowing "Phantom Details" to occur hurts us on two fronts. The contract requires employees to work their Form 50 bid assignment. If an employee is out working on a "Phantom Detail" now his job is vacant and the employee for all practical purposes is holding down "two" jobs.

Although Article 25 allows for the proper utilization of detail assignments, it is not intended to be abused in such a manner in which it is now being utilized to circumvent seniority and the proper posting of jobs. It is important that employees work their bid assignments, if management wants to "tuck" an employee away in a "cushiony job" then that "cushiony job" should be posted for bid to the senior bidder. If management claims the position is an EAS job make sure that you conduct a proper investigation to verify whether or not the work falls within bargaining unit duties or EAS duties. If the employee is working in an EAS position outside the bargaining unit for more than 90 days then their bid assignment must be posted for bid. Often times the employer will try to combat the argument by saying, "Oh no. We are only paying the employee their regular PS level 6 or 7 bargaining unit pay." This is not a defense as it matters not how the employee is being paid which determines whether it is bargaining unit work but rather does the work being performed fall under job descriptions or work which has been historically performed by the clerk craft.

In Solidarity.

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO Step 3



DIRECT APPEAL Grievance Form

Table with 4 columns: Name of District or Area, Policy, Instruction or Guideline at Issue, Craft, Date of Appeal. Row 1: Detroit District, Improper Details, clerk, 01/08/17. Row 2: Contract, Article 5, 7,8,12,15,19,37, EL-312, PSE MOU, Region's Grievance No., USPS Grievance No.

The above grievance is appealed by the APWU to Step 3 Postal Service Representative

Zana Dakroub, Labor Relations
USPS, Detroit NDC
17500 Oakwood Blvd.
Allen Park, MI 48101

Any grievance involving any new or changed district or area wide policy, instructions, or guidelines, shall be directed at step 3 to management's representative at this level and shall specify the reasons the grievance.

'I his appeal is in accordance with Article 15 Sec. 2 Step 3 (f) for the following reasons:

The Detroit District in an ongoing and continuing violation have established a "changed or new policy." Article 15.2 provides for the Regional Coordinator or National Business Agent to file one grievance directly at Step 3 when the issue involves a new or changed "district..." policy, instruction, or guideline. "The intent of this grievance is to discourage the filing of multiple local grievances." As this is a precedent setting policy by the Detroit District a District Grievance is being initiated.

The Detroit District has unilaterally modified the EL-312 Handbook Section 716 which states that "Temporary assignment is the placement of an employee into an established position..." The employer by effective date January 06, 2017 and January 08, 2017 have improperly placed Mail Processing Clerks from Function 1 into details as SSDA Clerks in Function 4. This is an egregious violation as the Mail Processing Clerks are not "unassigned regulars" and hold bid duty assignments to which they are required to work. The Mail Processing Clerks are being detailed to non-vacant positions in Function 4. The Detroit District has additionally implemented a changed policy effective January 08, 2017 of sending bid holding Mail Processing Clerks to Window training in violation of JCI question 165 page 226, "Can a Mail Processing Clerk duty assignment be posted with Sales and Service Associate duties and Responsibilities? Response: No. However, the Mail Processing Clerk may perform any of the following duties: provide service at public window for non-financial transactions..."

Vacant duty assignments are required to be posted for bid to the entire installation, and if the positions are residual vacancies they are supposed to be filled by either e-reassign or PSE conversion. The Detroit District has implemented a changed policy of posting the Newly Established or vacant duty assignments for "detail" rather than the contractual requirement of posting for bid. The action also implements a new policy of allowing career employees with duty assignments to "Opt" on vacant duty assignments in violation of the PSE MOU page 258 which states in part "PSEs will be allowed to opt on a seniority basis for full-time (traditional and non-traditional) vacant, residual assignments in the installation for which they are qualified and which are not assigned to career employees." The Detroit District has refused to stop this new policy and the Manager of PEDC (the Manager of PEDC oversees the training for the District) is allowing Mail Processing Clerks to attend Window Training (financial transactions) in clear violation of the contract.

The action is even more egregious as the intent is to make an "end-run" around the language which requires the posting of newly established duty assignments and also is a direct affront as the employer has reverted positions in the very same section that they are now creating the improper details. An NLRB charge has also been filed on the action.

Remedy: Management immediately cease and desist the improper details. Management ceases and desist from sending bid holding Mail Processing Clerks to Window training. Each and every SSDA in the impacted offices be compensated at the overtime rate for each hour that a Mail Processing Clerk is improperly detailed to Function Four (Per the notice 20 MPCs at 8 hours per day for 120 days amounts to approximately \$806,000.00). The amount could increase depending upon the number of offices and or installations impacted as this is an ongoing and continuing violation. Full-time career duty assignments to be immediately posted for career employees to bid mirroring the detail assignments established by the notice posting, should the positions become residual vacancies then they are to be filled per the contractual pecking order. Out of Schedule pay to be granted to the successful bidder for the new position.

Regional Coordinator or National Business Agent

James Stevenson, NBA
Chicago Division
APWU

55 E Jackson Blvd, Ste. 400
Chicago, IL 60604

Sincerely yours,

APWU Representative

# Postmaster General To Retire, Postal Board Of Governors To Appoint Successor

In mid-October, the Postal Service announced the upcoming retirement of Postmaster General Megan Brennan, after serving in the position for five years. Her retirement will be effective Jan. 31, 2020. The task of appointing the next Postmaster General now falls to the Postal Service's Board of Governors. In a climate of increased financial and political pressure on the USPS, the selection of the next PMG will be essential to the Postal Service's future as a public institution.

One of the key goals of the postal reorganization in 1971 was removing political influence from the Post office. Previously, the Postmaster General was appointed directly by the President of the United States. Since 1971, members of the Postal Board of Governors are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, and the Board in turn selects the Postmaster General.

In August of this year, the Senate confirmed three nominees appointed

by President Trump to the Board of Governors and the Board reached a quorum for the first time since 2014. Now with a quorum, the Board is in a position to hire Brennan's replacement and set the course for the Postal Service's future. With the prefunding debacle still unresolved, there's real concern that the Trump Administration will pressure the Postal Board of Governors to appoint a Postmaster General who shares the White House's views on important issues of privatization, service standards and collective bargaining rights for postal workers.

"We must ensure that Postmaster General Brennan's successor shares postal workers' vision for a vibrant Postal Service that continues to belong to the people of the country," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

### Petition To Appoint A Postmaster General Who Supports A PUBLIC Postal Service

Signatory Organizations of A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal

Service are rallying their members onto a public petition demanding that the Postal Board of Governors appoint a new PMG who is committed to continuing public ownership of the Postal Service and to providing quality postal services to everyone – no matter who they are or where they live – at reasonable and uniform rates.

"Postal workers! Now is the time to rally the public in support of our national treasure, the public United States Postal Service," said President Dimondstein. "Talk to your co-workers, neighbors and friends, and ask them to sign the petition. Meet outside of post offices and talk to customers about the importance of a public Postal Service. Let's send a clear message to the Postal Board of Governors that the people demand a public Postal Service – our jobs depend on it!"

The petition to the Board of Governors states:

We, the undersigned, believe in a

public Postal Service committed to providing quality service to everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, at reasonable and uniform rates. Our United States Postal Service is an essential part of the fabric of the country and a source of good, living wage jobs for our communities. We call on you to appoint a Postmaster General who is fully committed to universal service and the public ownership of the Postal Service.

Go to [usmailnotforsale.org](http://usmailnotforsale.org) or [apwu.org/petition](http://apwu.org/petition) to sign the petition today! Get a link sent to you by texting PETITION to 91990. You can download a PDF of the petition to print at [apwu.org/pmg](http://apwu.org/pmg).



**OPEN SEASON 2019**

Open Season Hotline  
(800) PIC-APWU | [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com)

More Open Season  
information coming soon!



## Serving America's workforce for 60 years.

Enroll during Open Season: November 11 – December 9, 2019.

**APWU Career:**  
Premiums **reduced** for both the High Option and Consumer Driven Option

**All other categories:**  
High Option premiums **reduced** and Consumer Driven Option premiums stay the same.



TOGETHER.BETTER HEALTH.®

### Premiums for the 2020 plan year.

| Enrollment type                        | Enrollment code | Non-Postal biweekly You pay | Non-Postal monthly You pay | Postal             |                    |                                 |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
|                                        |                 |                             |                            | Category 1 You pay | Category 2 You pay | APWU career greater than 1 year |
| High Option Self Only                  | 471             | \$99.41                     | \$215.38                   | \$96.13            | \$86.31            | \$96.13                         |
| High Option Self Plus One              | 473             | \$199.74                    | \$432.77                   | \$192.74           | \$171.73           | \$192.74                        |
| High Option Self and Family            | 472             | \$257.95                    | \$558.89                   | \$250.36           | \$227.60           | \$250.36                        |
| Consumer Driven Option Self Only       | 474             | \$68.96                     | \$149.42                   | \$66.20            | \$57.24            | \$1716                          |
| Consumer Driven Option Self Plus One   | 476             | \$149.88                    | \$324.75                   | \$143.89           | \$124.40           | \$46.41                         |
| Consumer Driven Option Self and Family | 475             | \$163.51                    | \$354.27                   | \$156.97           | \$135.71           | \$54.45                         |

Postal Category 1 rates apply to career bargaining unit employees represented by the APWU, IT/AS, NALC and NPMHU.  
Postal Category 2 rates apply to career bargaining unit employees represented by PPOA.  
Non-Postal rates apply to career non-bargaining unit Postal Service employees and career employees represented by NRLC.  
APWU non-career (PSE) employees: Please see the APWU Health Plan PSE flyer.  
APWU career rates apply to employees with more than one year in FEHB; otherwise, see Postal Category 1.

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by  
Linda  
Turney

# Turney At The Table

When you read, you empower yourself. When you write, you empower others.

### Include A List For Your Case File

Include a list of all documents in your case file when you send it up to step 3 or on direct appeal. Make sure you have and send all the items management puts on their document list. I have been in arbitration and management shows their document list. I did not have the list or the items on the list in my case file. We have to know what they are arguing and address those concerns, especially at arbitration. Do not forget to add your objections and proof to management's arguments in your Corrections and Additions.

### Include Extensions In Your Case File

Use the APWU extending time limits form. You should have a **written record** of all extensions. Verbal agreements to extend the time limits are not a proper extension. The written record must be signed and dated by both management and Union. It should

include a date that you have decided to meet. If either party does not abide by the date, move the grievance forward.  
**APWU Elections**

The APWU election has shown that we are not connecting with the people on the work room floor. Very few voted. Elections should be a celebration of our Union Democracy.

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint of an article produced by Beacon Health Options, Inc. written by Beth Landau. It has been cut for space. The complete article can be found here. For questions about APWUHP services and coverage offered please go to [apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com).

People do not think it could happen to their family or friends. They think only other people misuse opioids: people on the news or people who are weak or bad. But people from all backgrounds can misuse opioids. They are not bad or weak. They are the people we know. They are our family members or friends. Opioid misuse has become a national crisis.

I want to do what I can to assist you in getting our Union members involved. We owe a debt to our Union that we cannot repay. We need every member to know about keeping our jobs. We need to work toward better policies for working families and overcome gridlock in our Congress to affect those policies. We have a big job in front of us and we need every

member to attain our goals.

### Happy Holidays

I hope your holidays are blessed with multitudes of family and friends. Thank you for your activism and membership in our great Union. Thank you for your hard work, generosity and most of all your friendship. I am giving thanks for the opportunity to serve you.

## How To Support Someone You Know Who Is Misusing Opioids

### Recognizing Opioid Misuse

Not all opioid use is misuse. Some people safely use opioids their doctors give them. In some cases, legal opioids can help treat acute, or short-term, pain. People may use opioids after surgery or an accident.

How can you tell if someone is misusing opioids? There are many signs, including:

- Changes in how he looks, acts, and relates to other people
- Changes in physical or behavioral health...
- Missing work or school
- Poor work or school performance...
- Switching groups of friends
- Slurred speech or stumbling...
- Taking opioid medicine after her injury or illness is healed...

### How To Help

You cannot fix opioid misuse for someone else. It is not easy to stop misusing opioids. A person's body becomes used to opioids. They change the way the brain handles pain and pleasure. After a while, the body needs the opioid to function. The person may need more and more opioids to feel good. This creates a cycle that is hard to break...What kind of help can you give? Your role is to give kind support.

- Let the person know you care, and offer your support.
- Talk to him about your concerns.
- Let her share her thoughts and feelings. Do not assume you know how she feels.
- Let him know that he is not alone. Urge him to seek help. Encourage him to talk to a doctor about it, even

if he does not think it is a problem. Offer to take him to a support group. Many religious and nonreligious groups offer substance misuse support.

- Help her find treatment choices. Different insurance plans cover different services. The insurance provider can give her information. There are many types of treatment programs. Offer to help her pick a place to start.

- Try to ease his mind about what opioid misuse treatment looks like. The most common image is of a cold-turkey detox – suddenly stopping the opioid and going through a withdrawal. Though detox followed by a 12-step program is still common, it is generally not the best method. This is also called “abstinenceonly”. “Abstinence-only” approaches may work for some but not all. Everyone who misuses opioids deserves to understand all treatment options including medication-assisted treatment (MAT)...

- Help reduce stigma. There is a lot of negative judgment about substance misuse... Common stereotypes show people who misuse opioids as bad, lazy, or dangerous. This makes it hard to see the person instead of just the misuse. People may be prejudiced against these stereotypes. That leads to unfair treatment and unkind words or actions. It makes people who misuse opioids feel ashamed and depressed. This makes them avoid seeking help and makes it harder to stick with treatment.

- Be aware of your own beliefs and stereotypes. Avoid judging the person. Be kind and open-minded. Make it clear that you see the person, not just the misuse...

## Veteran News

continued from page 5

Arbogast, David's Sister, is ready to lay to rest the big brother she lost too soon.

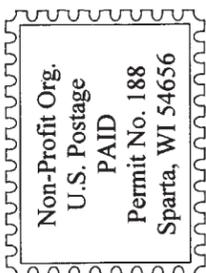
### MERRY CHRISTMAS

Merry Christmas to you and your family. I hope it is a blessed, and safe one for you and yours. Keep safe, don't drink and drive, eat lightly, so you don't have to make up some crazy News Years resolution that you're going to exercise

and lose weight. And don't forget our troops. Say a prayer, or whatever you do, for them and their families.

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year to one and all. Ditto on the words above about being safe and not drinking and driving and those resolutions that are so far out of reach that you can't keep them. Keep our troops and their families in your prayers and thoughts.



Return to APWU/MPWU  
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Change of Service Requested