

# Michigan MESSENGER



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## PRESIDENT



by  
Michael  
Mize

# Stay Safe For Friends And Family

Broken record? Brothers and Sisters, I hate to sound like one, but we don't want to see anyone hurt or the loss of any more lives.

I wrote about staying vigilant in a recent article. We have watched the COVID numbers increase since that article. We have watched the numbers in the Post Office increase like wildfire since that article as well. Yes, I know that being vigilant will not always keep you from catching COVID19. I also know that being careful and vigilant can help to slow it down. It can help to keep from passing it to another person, maybe a family member that has a higher risk.

I know all of this as since my last article my household has been careful. Unfortunately, we had a member of our household that was exposed at work while having to work closely with another employee. That led to a

positive case, which in turn led to the rest of the house contracting the virus. But we did the right thing. We found out on day 1 that

many other people. Because of the date I quarantined and when I displayed symptoms, tested positive, I did not expose

I know it is getting old, we are all tired of this. As your State President I am pleading with you all to take all precautions and be diligent. The life you save could be one very dear to yourself.

### A successful Safe Start means we all have to do our part.

It's safest to stay home.

BUT IF YOU HEAD OUT:

Wear a mask.



Stay six feet apart.



Wash your hands.



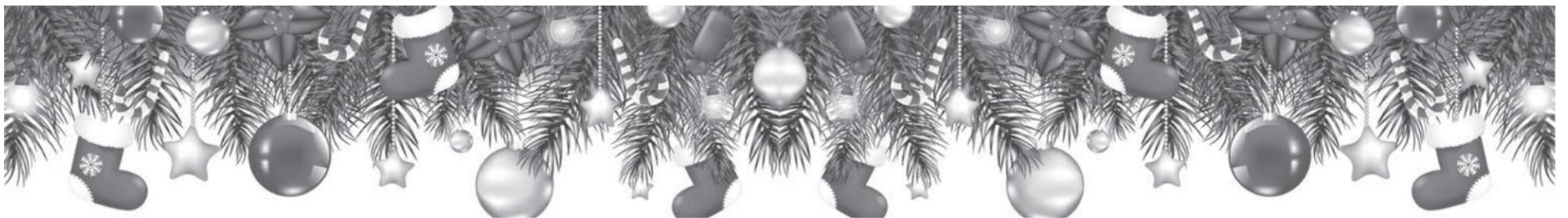
Prevent the spread by staying local.

there was an exposure. On day 1 the family member started to display symptoms and the whole household started a quarantine. We also isolated in the home as we are fortunate to be able to do so. By quarantining early as we did, we did not expose

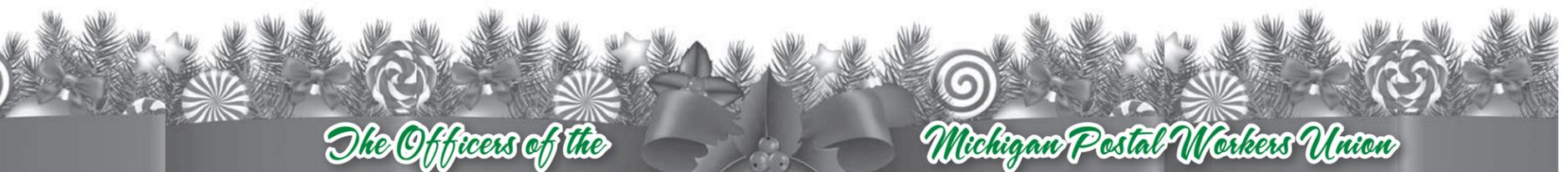
anyone outside my home. This most likely stopped the need to quarantine and possible exposure of dozens of other Postal Employees and Union Officers. We all must think ahead and do our best to protect others as well as ourselves.

Along with the above I want to remind everyone as we are in the peak season battle now to stay safe at work. We often see injuries in the office that happen this time of year because we are rushing to get the mail out. Believe me, I want our customers to get their mail, on time. I do not want that to be at the expense of our membership. An injury can take months to heal, an injury can be permanent. Work hard but work smart as well. We need you to get through the season and celebrate the success on the backside of it. Your family needs you to stay healthy and safe. So please stay aware in the office and work in a safe manner.

In Unity.



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



*The Officers of the*

*Michigan Postal Workers Union*

AREA 4 DIRECTOR

Postal Rules Still Continue On

by Sandy Rancour Area 4 Director

We have just celebrated the holiday of Thanksgiving. Like most people, mine was a small gathering, my bubble only. Very quiet but I was happy to be safe and keep my family safe. I don't know what Christmas will bring, but I am all for the small gathering than having my family at risk.

That being said the postal rules still continue on for all of us regardless we are working in a pandemic.

Please do the right thing and cover

yourself if you are sick. There are procedures we have in place if you feel you have some of the symptoms but we must do them correctly. Contacting your supervisor if you have any of the symptoms related to COVID-19, they should advise you of your next step. The call-in number also asks if the sick call could be related to COVID-19. Also, if you have been exposed, same thing, contact your supervisor and there is protocol you have to follow. They usually have you quarantine for 14 days and be tested. Management also contacts you or the postal nurse to ask some questions before your return

to work. Do not just assume calling in sick is good enough we must follow the guidelines in place to help stop the spread. And to stop any discipline for missing work. If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to call us. We have the COVID-19 procedures that are continually being updated as time goes by extending through the end of the year and can answer any questions you might have on what you need to do.

Stay Safe and Healthy.

In Unity.

Democrats Push To Fill Postal-Service Board Of Governors Seats To Stymie DeJoy, Reverse Cuts

LOUIS DEJOY, the Republican donor-cum-postmaster general, was a top target for Democrats who accused him of slowing down mail ahead of an election with record absentee voting and instituting cost cuts that worsened services. But even after President-elect Joe Biden takes office, DeJoy will prove hard to replace. Postmasters general serve at the pleasure of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors, and can't be directly fired by a president. Trump Republican appointees hold a 4-2 majority on the board, which can have up to three more governors.

Like much else in Washington, DeJoy's fate may be linked to the outcome of the Georgia runoffs for U.S. Senate. Democrats on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which oversees the USPS, are eager to fill the vacant seats on the board and move away from the "cost cutting mentality" among Postal Service leadership that has contributed to declines in service, said an aide to the committee's top Democrat, Sen. Gary Peters. DeJoy has testified that the changes were meant to improve operational efficien-

cy. The USPS is on track to lose more than \$10 billion this year. After early criticism, DeJoy in August promised to give priority to the delivery of mail ballots, and while there were some delays and missing ballots, the vast majority of mail-in ballots were delivered on time to election officials

Biden told a postal-workers union during the campaign that he would move to fill the board vacancies. Incoming top committee Republican Sen. Rob Portman "will review any nominations as they come before the committee," his spokeswoman said.

— postal-reporter.com

Supporting Mental Health During The COVID-19 Pandemic

The global coronavirus pandemic has impacted not only the physical health of many individuals and their loved ones, but their mental health as well. With the pandemic and related economic downturn, many Americans are experiencing higher than normal levels of stress, anxiety and worries. Stress affects employees and employers at home and in the workplace. Whether they are friends or family, there are several ways to support the people you care about.

Take Care Of Your Mental Health

Mental health is an important part of overall health and wellbeing. It

affects how we think, feel, and act. It may also affect how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices during an emergency.

People with pre-existing mental health conditions or substance use disorders may be particularly vulnerable in an emergency mental health condition (such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia) affect a person's thinking, feeling, mood or behavior in a way that influences their ability to relate to others and function each day. These conditions may be situational (short-term) or long-lasting (chronic). People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms. If you think you have new or worse symptoms, call your healthcare provider.

How Do I Know If Someone Has A Mental Health Problem?

Sometimes it will seem obvious when someone is going through a hard time, but there is no simple way of knowing if they have a mental health problem. Sometimes you don't need to know. It's more important to respond sensitively to someone who seems troubled than to find out

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The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

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, Stevensville, Traverse City, Troy Local, Western MI, Southwest MI.

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## E·D·I·T·O·R



by  
John  
Greathouse

With the election behind us where we, Americas Postal Service, showed just what we can do by delivering a record number of absentee ballots

and now a record parcel volume for Christmas, we will come through again.

As 2020 is winding down (not soon enough), and as the madness of peak season hits the plant with 12-hour shifts, 7-days a week, yet management still not being able to plan ahead

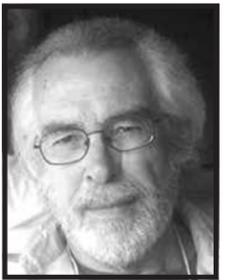
and get additional staffing well be for now?

Looking at how this year has gone and with the release of the first vaccine for COVID-19, I am hopping for a more . . . normal 2021. I missed family get togethers, going anywhere without a mask, taking a vacation, watching the

Olympics (I was selected to officiate at the U.S. Paralympic Trials but between covid and Minneapolis burning down, it did not happen) and a whole lot more. 2021 should be a much better "mental health" year for all of us.

I hope everyone has a safe, and joyful Holidays!

## R·E·T·I·R·E·P·R·E·S·I·D·E·N·T



by  
Paul  
Browning

Are things ever going to settle down? An absolutely bizarre Presidential election and aftermath, the continuing COVID-19 crisis with mask/no mask, travel/no travel heated arguments, immigrant children in cages, Climate Change debates (really?!?), American citizens openly carrying guns in everywhere from State Capitols to even local bars and restaurants, Anti-racism demonstrations devolving into riots (which to be fair happens every time sometime some team wins a Championship in some sport or other or there is a natural disaster with people looting commercial establishments), China, Iran, the downgrading and financial trouble of the most trusted government agency the U.S. Postal Service, the Supreme Court, environmental disasters, neighbors and family members shaking their heads at each other if they are even still talking over controversial topics – it's enough to drive a sane person crazy and a crazy person to say I told you so.

We retirees remember the weekly grade school drills of crouching under our supposedly atom bomb proof desks. High School years saw assassinations, civil unrest riots of everyone from minorities, students, to even police, the tragedy of Vietnam and Southeast Asia with our war-scarred military veterans who returned home and those who didn't. Now, we finally reach the Promised Land of golden retirement years and the world around us seems even more completely bonkers than it did in our youth. Will things ever settle down?

The answer is most probably not. We're human beings with all the possibilities history has shown us capable of. We can accomplish great achievements for the betterment of our race or be incredibly venial in our cruelties. The good news is we really have made progress since our ancestors climbed out of the mud. It was only a

## Will It Always Be This Crazy?

few thousand years ago that human sacrifice was commonplace. Tortures unthinkable today were routine in even so-called civilized countries a few hundred years ago. Only 160 years ago in our own Beacon of Democracy, slavery was a perfectly legitimate practice. But we have moved onward and upward by degrees albeit with no small struggle. We do have the capacity to continually improve our lot as members of the human race.

Some consider our new United States President a man dedicated to restoring calmness and sanity to the country. Others (and this is really a far-out fantasy) see him as a doddering old fool to be used by evil forces.

I'm a member of the former group and I truly believe that the overwhelming majority of my fellow countrymen and women are well intentioned even if I think them misguided at times. I confess I may occasionally view those people with extreme dislike but I do not go so far as to engage in actual hatred. One of the unique characteristics we humans possess is empathy – the ability to imagine what another person feels like. Whether it was my parents, teachers, or just own innate ability, it is not too difficult to practice the "walk a mile in my shoes" concept. Sure, I do my share of name calling. But any ill will I wish on others is ultimately followed by the shame of such unchristian thoughts.

Tomorrow will be another day in Humanity's never-ending fight to improve ourselves as inhabitants of the planet and even take care of this ball of mud we live on. We have proved in the past we can do it. There will be setbacks and upheaval but Hope springs eternal and with concerted effort "Yes, We can" will prevail.

**Postscript to 2020:** By the time any readers get this, the madhouse Post Office Christmas rush season will be over or almost so. Whatever holiday you celebrate, be it Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Bodhi Day, Winter Solstice or don't celebrate at all for that matter, may the New Year be a damn sight better for all of us.

## Social Security Announces 1.3 Percent Benefit Increase For 2021

The following is a press release from the Social Security Administration:

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for approximately 70 million Americans will increase 1.3 percent in 2021, the Social Security Administration announced on October 13.

The 1.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 64 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2021. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2020. (Note: some people receive both Social Security and SSI benefits). The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Some other adjustments that take effect in January of each year are based on the increase in aver-

age wages. Based on that increase, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$142,800 from \$137,700.

Social Security and SSI beneficiaries are normally notified by mail starting in early December about their new benefit amount. Most people who receive Social Security payments will be able to view their COLA notice online through their personal my Social Security account. People may create or access their my Social Security account online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount).

Information about Medicare changes for 2021, when announced, will be available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). For Social Security beneficiaries receiving Medicare, Social Security will not be able to compute their new benefit amount until after the Medicare premium amounts for 2021 are announced. Final 2021 benefit amounts will be communicated to beneficiaries in December through the mailed COLA notice and my Social Security's Message Center.

The Social Security Act provides for how the COLA is calculated. To read more, please visit [www.socialsecurity.gov/cola](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cola).

**— DEADLINE —**  
for articles for the next issue  
of the *Michigan Messenger*  
is January 30, 2021

VETERANS' DIRECTOR

# Veteran Report



by  
**John P.  
Smeekens**

### THE PLEDGE

The Women in Military Service for America Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery includes a new monument called "The Pledge". Located in the center of the memorial's lobby, it is a bronze sculpture commissioned by the U.S. War Dogs Association of a combat nurse and a military working dog, with an inscription reminding visitors that "women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom."

### MUSEUM OPENING

The National Museum of the United States Army, a 185,000-square-foot steel-clad building at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, was opened to the public on Nov. 11. Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy said the museum "will be a place for members of the Total Army family to gather and share stories while also creating an opportunity for visitors to connect with our nation's history through the eyes and voices of individual soldiers."

### ORDER # 3387

This Order is intended to ensure that veterans of the United States Armed Forces and Gold Star Families have free access to national parks and other Federal lands managed by the Department of the Interior. For the purposes of this Order, the term "veterans of the United States Armed Forces" shall mean those individuals who have

served in the United States Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, and are able to present, at a minimum, one of the following forms of identification: 1. Department of Defense Identification Card; 2. Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC); 3.



Veteran ID Card; or 4. Veteran's designation on a State-issued driver's license or identification card.

### BLUE ANGELS FINAL HORNET FLIGHT

The Navy's Blue Angels conducted their final flight in the legacy F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet recently. The flight, which took off from, and landed at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, marked the end of the F/A-18 A/B/C/D platform's 34 years as the Blue An-

gels' aircraft as the team transitions to F/A-18 E/F Super Hornets. The move to the Super Hornet will mark the first time the elite Navy and Marine Corps demonstration team has changed aircraft since it moved from the A-4F Skyhawk II to the Hornet back in 1986.

In addition to being the Super Hornet's first show season with the team, 2021 will mark the Blue Angels' 75th anniversary. Since its formation, the team has flown in front of more than 500 million spectators around the world as "ambassadors of goodwill." The Blue Angels will begin their scheduled winter training in late November the news release stated. Stationed in Pensacola only for the show season, team members will begin their move to winter training facilities in El Centro, California, in January, remaining there until show season begins in April.

### WALMART VA TELEHEALTH

Howell Michigan Walmart Store Number #1754 is presently the only one operating here in Michigan. ATLAS sites (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations) offer services that do not require hands-on exams, such as primary care, nutrition, mental health counseling and social work. Establishing these points of care closer to Veterans' homes, ATLAS reduces obstacles and increases access to care.

### PTSD QUARTERLY

I've mentioned this before, but with all the crazy stuff happening here in 2020 I thought it might be a good time to bring up this website, where you can go to sign up for PTSD information, on a quarterly basis. So here is the website [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

They can help with many different things that lead to PTSD. DO IT!!!

### VA AND COVID-19

Planning is underway at the VA to deliver a COVID-19 vaccine when

one becomes available. VA is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop a phased plan based on five core ethical pillars: safety, maximizing the benefit of the vaccine, equity, fairness and transparency. Veteran and employee safety remain their #1 priority. The plan takes into consideration a number of risk factors, including risks of acquiring infection, severe illness and death if infected, and transmitting the disease, as well as the risk to essential workers, including health care personnel. Initially, the VA expects supplies to be limited. Based on these risk factors, VA will offer the vaccine first to high-risk health care personnel (HCP), as they are essential in continuing to care for patients throughout the pandemic. As more vaccines become available, VA will offer the vaccine to high-risk Veterans. VA's ultimate goal is to offer it to all Veterans and employees who want to be vaccinated.

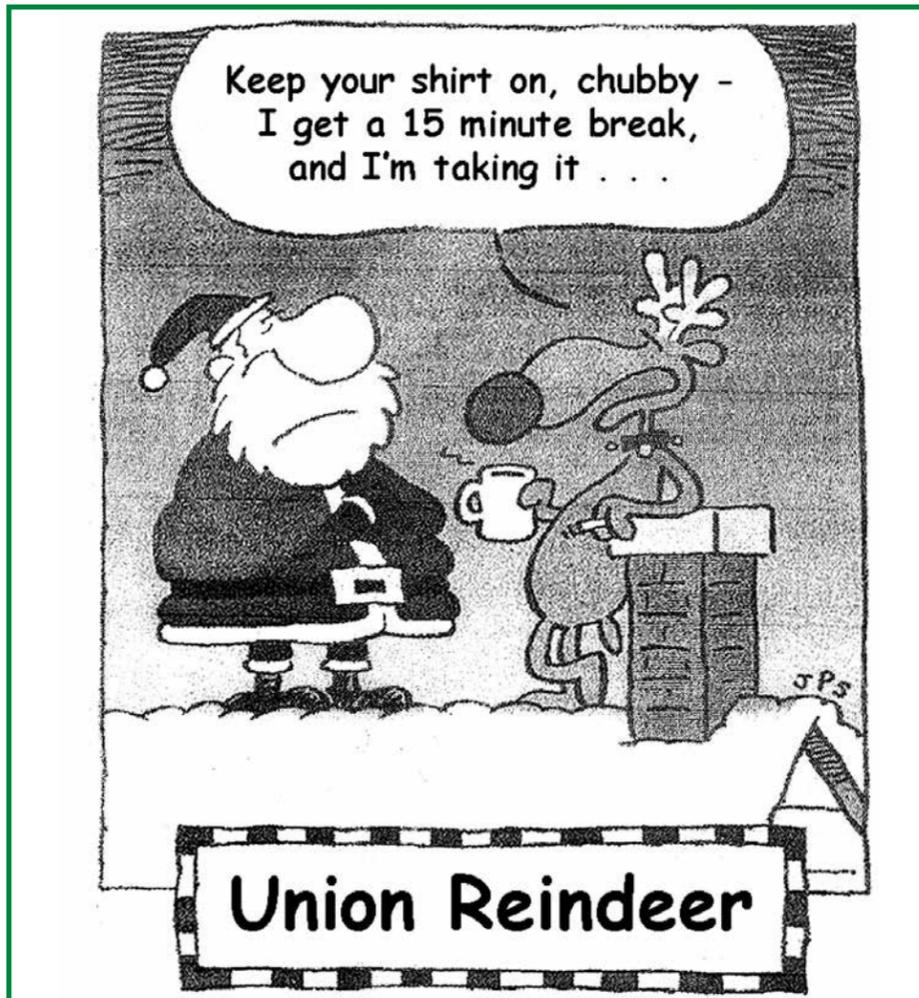
### VIRUS, NORAD, AND SANTA

Children of the world can rest easy. The global pandemic won't stop NORAD from *tracking Santa Claus' progress* as he delivers gifts around the globe on Christmas Eve.

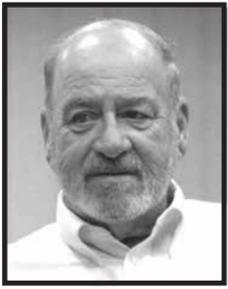
The North American Aerospace Defense Command has announced that NORAD will track Santa on Dec. 24, just as it has done for 65 years. But there will be some changes: Not every child will be able to get through to a volunteer at NORAD's call center to check on Santa's whereabouts, as they have in years before. Normally, 150-160 volunteers crowd into a conference room at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, taking two-hour shifts to answer the phones as eager children call to see if Santa and his sleigh have reached their rooftops. Altogether, 1,500 people over 20 hours have participated in the call center in the past, fielding more than 130,000 phone calls, beginning at 6 a.m. Eastern time on Christmas Eve. This year, due to safety restrictions forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of volunteers has been drastically cut to what NORAD expects will be fewer than 10 people per shift. So, some callers may be able to get through to a member once again, or other volunteer when they dial the NORAD Tracks Santa toll-free number, 1-877-Hi-NORAD. But others will get a recorded update on Santa's current location.

### JUST FOR YOU

To all my union brothers and sisters, and my VETERAN brothers and sisters, may you all have a **MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR** and most of all stay safe and be careful!!!



## M.P.W.U. RETIREE ADVISOR . . .



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

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

**JOB WELL DONE!** U.S. Postal Workers come through! Despite the manufactured obstacles thrown in their way by a felonious PMG; ballots by mail won the day! Now, the mailing public can hardly ignore the value, the absolute necessity of a viable U.S. Postal Service, and our working Sisters and Brothers Did It! The spotlight was on the USPS. One side in the presidential election doing everything it could to curtail the mail to fail, and the U.S. postal workers foiled their nefarious intentions, while the prevailing side placed their trust in the USPS to save the soul of our nation. Magnificent! Couldn't have produced a more vivid ad to Save Our Service.

**Michigan Blue Again!** Well . . . almost. By 154,000 votes, but of 83 MI Counties; 71 red, 12 blue. My own "First of the 83" Alcona voted RED 2.26 - 1. I'm surrounded! Trumplican yard signs popped up like toadstools denigrating out-

# A View From The Mitt

standing, courageous Michigan's "iron Lady" Governor, Gretchen Whitmer. "Moron". "Idiot". They label themselves. Casualties fomented by the outgoing regime abound. I can [eventually] forgive, But, I will not forget.

**Presidential – Senate Election Results: Profound Relief! Deep Satisfaction!** A sense of having dodged the bullet. Tempered with the reality that the swamp is still full of denizens; Senators Mitch McConnell and Lindsey Graham, PMG Louis DeJoy, among GOP critters to deal with by the incoming Biden-Harris administration. In my view; the war vs COVID-19 is paramount. Simultaneously; the liberation of the 638 manufactured orphans at our southern border from their cages and initiate a concerted federal reunification with their families. Unlike Cabinet positions; the position of Postmaster General doesn't go away with the outgoing administration. He's in place until resigned or removed. That's the jurisdiction of the bipartisan USPS Board of Governors who backdoored his appointment originally. The first step is to revamp the B.O.G., then task the B.O.G. to either seek DeJoy's resignation or FIRE him! DeJoy, by US

Code, committed a felony with his ill-fated delay tactics to sabotage the vote by mail. DeJoy has to go before he can inflict further damage.

**Re-election of Senator Gary Peters D-MI** at least as important as the Biden-Harris victory. Sen. Peters, as ranking minority member of the Senate Committee with USPS operations oversight is the catalyst to initiate the process to flush DeJoy. I am writing Sen. Peters to request that he exercise his good offices to seek PMG DeJoy's removal by all means necessary before he can further damage the USPS. The more requests, the better.

**A Star Is Born! Brother Byron C. Denton**, past Western Region Retiree Delegate, is the "star" of an APWU TV commercial ad to be aired in the near future. The gist of the ad was to get a 90-year old postal worker to appear in the ad. Byron 92, was the likely spokesperson. I got to hear about the whole process, start to finish. I'm anxious to view the finished product.

**Advantage Ad Nauseum! Medicare!** Medicare Advantage! An incessant barrage of Advantage this and that, "Free" this 'n that. Our own APWU Health Plan now engaged with a Medicare Advantage plan. To

WHOSE advantage?! It's coming from all directions. What's this phenomenon? Reams of mailed "advantage" materials, and nothing to convince me to jump on the advantage bandwagon. Oh yeah; \$144. per month added to Social Security. Just my skeptical view, but if it sounds too good to be true . . .

**Stay Strong!** We're living in a bizarre time. It takes its toll both physically and mentally, and in many ways more difficult for others in devastating ways; financially to food on the table and shelter. We will, or can, come out on the other side IF we ALL respect one another's right-to-life by following the CDC scientific protocols by wearing a mask when in public and distancing ourselves. By being smart about it we can survive this scourge. Be A Patriot! Patriots wear face AND OVER THE NOSE masks and keep their distance! In the meantime; Get Your Flu Shot! Man! This old age ain't for sissies!

**Warmest Holiday Wishes** however you observe December holy days or holidays; secular or religious, and that the New 2021 Year will Make America Kind Again!

**SOLIDarity Forever!**

## What Is Advanced Sick Leave

by Mark Ferrari

Per the Employee Labor Manual (ELM), Advance Sick Leave is sick leave that "may be advanced in cases of serious disability or ailment if there is reason to believe the employee will return to duty. Sick leave may be advanced whether or not employees have annual leave to their credit."

For example, let's say you have no sick leave left and you are scheduled to have surgery on your back next month.

Your doctor says you will need to be off work for 3 weeks and you can return to work after the 3 weeks. Since many of us would be in a certain degree of financial hardship without any money coming in for 3 weeks, the Advance Sick Leave would certainly come in handy. When you return to work, the sick leave that was advanced to you would have to be paid back.

This is accomplished by the USPS deducting your sick leave as you accrue it until the sick leave is paid back.

Also, you do not have to exhaust all of your annual leave before re-

questing Advance Sick Leave.

When applying for Advance Sick Leave, you must submit medical documentation supporting your request. For example, your physician can state that "due to surgery, the employee will need to be off work during whatever timeframe and will return to duty after this time."

The request should be submitted well enough in advance so as to have the sick leave forwarded to you by the time you off work. This will ensure you don't go without pay. The request can be submitted to your supervisor who should then forward it to the proper management authority for approval.

In lieu of giving the request to your supervisor, members can go to their steward who can ensure the request is properly handled. While there are some capable supervisors, unfortunately, many have a tendency to forget about issues like this which will leave you scrambling at the last minute. Thus, see your steward if possible.

You are allowed up to 30 days (240 hours) of Advance Sick Leave per request. As previously stated,

you must be returning to work after your absence if you want the request for Advance Sick Leave approved. This is because the USPS wants to ensure you will be able to pay it back.

The main advantage of Advance Sick Leave is that it allows someone to continue receiving a paycheck during an absence that would normally

have been without pay due to lack of sick leave.

Advance Sick Leave is a seldom used benefit that is sometimes misunderstood by both craft employees and management. Therefore, it is important that you ask your union steward for information on this so as to properly determine if Advance Sick Leave will work for you. – *The Hi-Lites*



# How Postal Workers Saved The Election

by Jane Slaughterenlarge

Jane Slaughter is a former editor of Labor Notes and co-author of a Successful Organizer.

The story of mail ballots in 2020 is the story of a union postal workforce willing to go to extraordinary lengths to make sure that every vote got delivered.

Postal workers did this despite the deliberate holdups created by new Postmaster General Louis “Delay the Mail” DeJoy, and a workforce hit hard by COVID.

But his plan isn’t the only one on offer. A working group of rank and filers has compiled all the ways his vision is antithetical to what the public needs.

To imagine a green, expanded, universal Postal Service with more hours, more services, and more good jobs, visit [bit.ly/postalvision](http://bit.ly/postalvision).

More than 65 million people voted by mail this fall — a record. And the Postal Service has been working at reduced numbers for months. As of August 40,000 postal employees had been forced to quarantine. Roscoe Woods, president of the 480–481 Area Local of the Postal Workers (APWU) near Detroit, said the workforce he represents is down 30 percent.

How did postal workers pull off this gargantuan feat? “Most of our employees were very prideful,” said Keith Combs, president of the APWU



Detroit local. “They were really happy they were able to complete the mission with the ballots. They want the Post Office to be seen in a different light than the White House had been portraying it.”

### ABOVE AND BEYOND

Woods represents workers at the Michigan Metroplex in Pontiac, the largest mail processing facility in the region. On a normal day it processes a couple of million pieces of mail. How did workers make sure the ballots didn’t get lost in that fast-moving stream?

The mail is sorted at 36,000 pieces per hour by giant machines that read the envelopes. Before the election, workers set the machine to direct ballots to a designated holdout, then took them

to another area for special manual sorting. Experienced clerks hand-sorted the ballots to county clerks’ zip codes. From there they were dispatched by truck.

Workers went further. “Say a ballot arrives in Flint but it was supposed to go to Muskegon,” Woods said. “Our people were meeting people in the middle to hand them off. I checked in with my plant manager the day of the election at a quarter to 8 [when polls closed]. He had just sent a supervisor out with 10 ballots to drop off at the Clerk’s office.

“Whatever was necessary. Our people rose to the occasion. It’s not every day you become an active participant in a functioning democracy.”

### GET THE CROOK OUT?

All year postal workers have been under attack by the Postmaster General, a Trump fundraiser and expert job-killer from private logistics. Hundreds of mail sorting machines were dismantled; overtime was denied; letter carriers were directed not to sort all their mail when received, but to leave it behind for the next day.

It was only an outcry from postal unions and the public that forced DeJoy to say, on August 18, that he would postpone his service cuts till after the election. But he made clear he was only hitting pause.

Contrary to what you might assume, DeJoy and his schemes won’t automatically be swept out by a new administration. The men who hired him, and could fire him, are the Postal Board of Governors.

Unfortunately, the six current members are mostly anti-worker and pro-privatization. There are three empty seats that Joe Biden could fill immediately — except that any appointments must be confirmed by the Senate.

One promising strategy is to pressure the existing Board members, who aren’t used to a public spotlight. New Orleans activists got the ball rolling in October with a neighborhood “Cook Out to Get the Crook Out” near the home of one Postal Board member. Other members are in New York City, Los Angeles, eastern Kentucky, Palm Beach, and D.C. — for those similarly inspired.

## COPING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share

- 1 Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact
- 2 Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!
- 3 Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why
- 4 Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system
- 5 Get active. Even if you’re stuck indoors, move & stretch
- 6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them
- 7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help
- 8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly
- 9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them
- 10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up
- 11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you
- 12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast
- 13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with
- 14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger
- 15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you
- 16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits
- 17 Learn something new or do something creative
- 18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity
- 19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small
- 20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself
- 21 Send a letter or message to someone you can’t be with
- 22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others
- 23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news
- 24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go
- 25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths
- 26 Take a small step towards an important goal
- 27 Thank three people you’re grateful to and tell them why
- 28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year
- 29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing
- 30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time



“Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances” ~ Viktor Frankl



# Continuing Our Work In A New Administration

The past four years have been perhaps the most critical since the founding of A Grand Alliance to Save our Public Postal Service in 2013. The Trump administration, following decades of corporate-backed hostility to a public Post Office, had pursued an increasingly aggressive attack on our national treasure.

While a changing political landscape means the Trump administration's hostility will soon be behind us, supporters of our public Postal Service cannot let down their guard. We should take this moment of transition to reflect on the important role the Alliance played, celebrate our successes, and also critically analyze the threats that remain to a most vital national institution.

From the early days of the outgoing administration, it was clear that President Trump was no friend of the public Postal Service. His early appointees to the Postal Board of Governors were almost uniformly businessfriendly chief executives, with little to no previous interest in the preservation and expansion of the public Postal Service. As the financial crisis caused by the unprecedented retiree health ben-

efits prefunding mandate deepened, the outgoing administration refused to champion needed reforms to free the Postal Service from the crippling mandate.

Instead, the administration echoed bogus fears of an impending "taxpayer bailout" of the Postal Service. By June 2018, the White House was on the record openly proposing the privatization of the Postal Service. In December 2018, the White House Task Force, having barely consulted postal workers or the millions of customers who rely on affordable, reliable universal service, proposed a series of draconian cuts that would have made the mail slower, less dependable and more expensive. It even suggested doing away with the collective bargaining rights of postal workers.

And most recently, as the pandemic took hold and further rocked the Postal Service's finances, the administration stubbornly blocked much-needed emergency funding for the Postal Service. The President called the people's Post Office "a joke" and again called for massive price increases that would have driven millions of customers out of the system.

Thankfully, at every turn, the members of A Grand Alliance and masses of supportive postal patrons across the country pushed back and fought to save the Postal Service. We petitioned the Board of Governors, rallied in the streets and in front of post offices, made tens of thousands of calls to Congress and delivered millions of petition signatures to leaders in Washington, D.C. Put simply, they wanted to steal the Postal Service. Together, we stopped them.

But we are not out of the woods yet. The Postal Service continues to face daunting financial challenges. It remains unclear if a new Congress is prepared to deliver the kind of reforms the postal public needs. Louis DeJoy, who in his earliest weeks as Postmaster General proposed a series of damaging changes to postal operations and policy, is still Postmaster General. He cannot be immediately removed by the Biden administration.

And most critically, while the forces that have long advocated postal privatization lost a champion in the White House, they remain an ever-present and powerful force in American politics, with benefactors

in both major political parties.

Members of A Grand Alliance must remain vigilant. We must be prepared to continue organizing and mobilizing against every threat to the public Postal Service. We must also be prepared to articulate a positive vision for a robust public agency – we must fight for what the Postal Service ought to be.

That's why the first order of business in the new year will be a major policy conference, to develop and build a plan to win a People's Postal Agenda. Stay tuned to APWU and A Grand Alliance websites and social media platforms for more details in the coming weeks.

A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service is a broad coalition of national, state and local organizations including the NAACP, Vote Vets, Jobs with Justice, National Council of Churches and Rainbow PUSH. These groups have come together to take a stand against the unprecedented assaults on the Postal Service including efforts to dismantle and privatize it. To join A Grand Alliance, visit [www.AGrandAlliance.org](http://www.AGrandAlliance.org).

## Supporting Mental Health During The COVID-19 Pandemic

*continued from page 2*

whether or not they have a diagnosis.

Although certain symptoms are common with specific mental health problems, no two people behave in exactly the same way when they are unwell. If you know the person well, you may notice changes in their behavior or mood.

Below are some signs of common mental health problems. Our A-Z of mental health provides information on a range of mental health problems not covered here.

### Signs Of Depression

People who are depressed may:

- have low confidence
- lose interest in activities they normally enjoy
- lose their appetite
- get tired easily
- be tearful, nervous, or irritable. At worst they may feel suicidal.

### Signs Of Anxiety

People experiencing anxiety may:

- have difficulty concentrating
- be irritable
- try to avoid certain situations
- appear pale and tense
- be easily startled by everyday sounds

### Panic Attacks

Panic attacks are usually a sign of anxiety. Someone having a panic attack experiences a sudden and intense sensation of fear. They may

breathe rapidly, sweat, feel very hot or cold, feel sick or feel faint.

### Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

OCD is a common form of anxiety involving distressing repetitive thoughts. Compulsions are the actions which people feel they must repeat to feel less anxious or stop their obsessive thoughts.

Some people who are distressed deliberately harm their bodies, usually secretly, using self-harm as a way of dealing with intense emotional pain. They may cut, burn, scald or scratch themselves, injure themselves, pull their hair or swallow poisonous substances.

Some people experience a severe mental health problem, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. They may have periods when they experience their own or a different reality. They may hear voices, see things no-one else sees, hold unusual beliefs, feel exceptionally self-important or read particular meanings into everyday events.

### HOW CAN I HELP?

There are a number of ways you can help a friend, relative or colleague who has a mental health problem:

### Talking About Mental Health

If you are worried about someone it can be difficult to know what to do. When you are aware there is an issue, it is important not to wait. Waiting and hoping they will come to you for help

might lose valuable time in getting them support.

Talking to someone is often the first step to take when you know they are going through a hard time. This way you can find out what is troubling them and what you can do to help.

### Eight Tips For Talking About Mental Health

1. Set time aside with no distractions

It is important to provide an open and non-judgmental space with no distractions.

2. Let them share as much or as little as they want to

Let them lead the discussion at their own pace. Don't put pressure on them to tell you anything they aren't ready to talk about. Talking can take a lot of trust and courage. You might be the *continued on page 8*



NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT . . .



by  
Devendra  
"D"  
Rathore

# COVID-19 Families First Coronavirus Response Act Leave

I hope everyone had a safe and wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday. As the weather gets colder, COVID-19 infections are still rapidly increasing all over the country. Please be sure to use the proper precautions to keep yourself safe and healthy while helping our APWU members on a day-to-day basis.

There is some confusion regarding the COVID-19 Families First Coronavirus Response Act leave (FFCRA).

## APWU POSITION: FFCRA EMERGENCY SICK LEAVE AND EXPANDED FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Questions and Answers dated April 9, 2020. Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act

## 19) Is the Postal Service still using Administrative Leave in certain COVID-19 situations, and if so, what are those?

Yes, in certain circumstances the Postal Service may still authorize use of Administrative Leave, but it is expected that Emergency Sick Leave would be used before COVID-19 Administrative Leave would be authorized.

### Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act

#### 6) Does this new qualifying reason entitle me to a new 12-week period under the FMLA?

No, each employee is still only entitled to 12 weeks of FMLA leave, regardless of reason. If you have already exhausted your FMLA leave for this year, you are not entitled to take FMLA leave for this new qualifying reason. If you have exhausted part of your FMLA leave entitlement, you can take any remaining FMLA leave for this new qualifying reason.

**USPS- Close – Contact-Tracing –** Program released on April 29, 2020, also states that

• Employees should then be placed on Emergency Paid Sick leave according to Families

First Coronavirus Response Act guidelines.

• If **Emergency Paid Sick Leave** has been exhausted, the employee will be placed on Administrative Leave. The employee must be instructed by the employer to quarantine.

If you need any information sent by APWU in the field for COVID-19 and MOU's Please visit [www.apwu.org/coronavirus](http://www.apwu.org/coronavirus).

Furthermore, I want to remind you once again that all the documents supporting your case sent to the Step 3

APWU NBA's must also be sent to the Labor Relations, USPS Tampa, FL. to possibly resolve grievances sooner. If you have any personal notes to the NBA's you can be sent to the NBA's.

Finally, please continue following the appropriate safety precautions necessary for staying safe during this pandemic as we head into the new year. Wear a mask, keep social distancing, and wash your hands often.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season and happy new year. Stay safe!

In Solidarity.

## Supporting Mental Health During The COVID-19 Pandemic

*continued from page 7*

first person they have been able to talk to about this.

3. Don't try to diagnose or second guess their feelings

You probably aren't a medical expert and, while you may be happy to talk and offer support, you aren't a trained counsellor. Try not to make assumptions about what is wrong or jump in too quickly with your own diagnosis or solutions.

4. Keep questions open ended  
Say "Why don't you tell me how you are feeling?" rather than "I can see you are feeling very low". Try to keep your language neutral. Give the person time to answer and try not to grill them with too many questions.

5. Talk about wellbeing  
Exercise, having a healthy diet and taking a break can help protect mental health and sustain wellbeing. Talk about ways of de-stressing and ask if they find anything helpful.

6. Listen carefully to what they tell you

Repeat what they have said back to them to ensure you have understood it. You don't have to agree with what they are saying, but by showing you understand how they feel, you are letting them know you respect their feelings.

7. Offer them help in seeking professional support and provide information on ways to do this

You might want to offer to go the GP with them, or help them talk to a friend or family member. Try not to take control and allow them to make decisions.

8. Know your limits

Ask for help or signpost if the problem is serious. If you believe they are in immediate danger or they have injuries that need medical attention, you need to take action to make sure they are safe.

### How Do I Respond In A Crisis?

People with mental health problems sometimes experience a crisis, such as breaking down in tears, having a panic attack, feeling suicidal, or experiencing their own or a different reality.

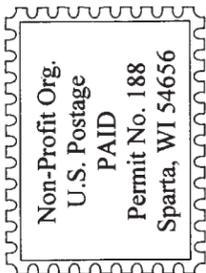
You may feel a sense of crisis too, but it's important to stay calm yourself.

There are some general strategies that you can use to help:

- Listen without making judgments and concentrate on their needs in that moment.
- Ask them what would help them.
- Reassure and signpost to practical information or resources.
- Avoid confrontation.
- Ask if there is someone they would like you to contact.
- Encourage them to seek appropriate professional help.
- If they have hurt themselves, make sure they get the first aid they need.

Seeing, hearing or believing things that no-one else does can be the symptom of a mental health problem. It can be frightening and upsetting. Gently remind the person who you are and why you are there. Don't reinforce or dismiss their experiences, but acknowledge how the symptoms are making them feel.

— Source: Centers for Disease Control



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

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