



**PRESIDENT**

**— PROUD —**



by  
**Michael  
Mize**

As your MPWU President working at the MPWU Convention and Trainings is an honor and a privilege. This year's event again left me feeling very proud of the Local and State representatives that came to train. It left me filled with joy seeing one of our own appointed to the Regional Coordinators position. I felt this article needed to explain what a great group of representatives we have here in Michigan. My hope is you will thank them for all they do when you see them.

Our very own Research and Education Director, Amy Puhalski, has been

appointed to Central Region Coordinator. Having known Amy for several years, traveled with her, worked with her and seen her love of the APWU I am certain she will flourish in the new position. Having one of our Michigan representatives picked for this is an acknowledgment of the great Union leadership we have here. Every Michigan member should join me in the proud moment and wish Amy the best.

Explaining more about the representatives. Some of these representatives that come and train are using their own leave to be trained on representing the members. Many are giving up their weekend and off time with their families to be at the training. They all deserve our appreciation.

At every event we raise money with

raffles and other things for our Campaign on Political Action or COPA. The group in Michigan always put together some great things to raffle off and in my opinion are second to none at giving to raise money. This year our COPA Captains, Wendy Kempke and Robin Ely lead the charge and lead the attendees to an amazing total of \$7,500.00. Great job by all involved!! If you are not a regular COPA contributor, please log in and make a change. Log in and set up COPAmatic. Even if you give \$5 per pay it adds up overall. These donations help us to get Postal positive legislation and Legislators.

Again, I must ask you all to take a



**Mike Mize and Amy Puhalski**  
*photo credit by John Greathouse*

moment and realize the great people we have representing us. I am proud and honored to work with this dedicated group of people.

In Unity.



**Members attending the 2023 Educational Conference.**

*photo credit by John Greathouse*

**Wishing Sharyn Stone  
The Best Retirement**

For over 20 years Sharyn Stone has represented the members. As everyone has already read in the National publications Sharyn retired the end of April. We thank her for her long dedication to the APWU and the members. We wish her a very long and happy retirement. We ask that every member in Michigan do the same and send great thoughts to Sharyn as she transitions into a well-deserved retirement. Thank you Sharyn!!

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by  
**John Greathouse**

**EDITOR**

# We Are All Going To Die! So, You Had Better Start Planning For It, NOW!

Kind of a shocking title but it is very much true for all of us, regardless of your age, you need to start planning now so your family doesn't have to deal with all of the issues if you don't

I had the opportunity to attend the MPWU Educational Seminar in Kalamazoo in late May. I attended a session on Elder Law. The group doing the presentation is from Elder Law of Michigan which is a free group to help anyone, regardless of age with planning for end of life, even if it is years out.

I found that all of us could benefit from this class as it applies to not just us, but our parents and maybe our kids too. So, let's get started on what you need and what happens when you don't.

**Last Will and Testament**

Sounds like a very pretentious title but it is a serious subject with a some choices.

**Will**

This is a formal or less formal document that dictates your last wishes and choices. It is witnessed by at least 2, non-related people and is recorded by the county clerk.

This is the most secure document that is difficult to challenge by your survivors and is normally done by an

attorney, so yes, its dose cost a little bit of money but it is worth it in the long haul. And should you decide to make a change and draw up a new will, the new one, as it is witnessed and recorded, will supersede the previous will.

**Holistic Will**

No, this Will, will not heal you but is a self-done or hand written will. Normally it is not registered and can be challenged much easier as it is not recorded and registered with the county. So yes, it will show what your wishes are, if someone doesn't like it or feels left out, they can sue your estate and try and get a piece of the pie.

**Statutory Will**

A Statutory Will is kind of the best of both worlds as it is a form, you fill in the blanks and file it with the county. It is a very basic will and it can help to make your decision as well as avoiding probate.

**Probate**

This is **NOT** where you want your estate to be handled. Your estate could wind up here if you don't have any of the above Wills in place. The probate judge will then decide what is done with your estate and in the end, your estate will be losing a lot of money to the court and none of your intentions or wishes will matter as you did not prepare.

There are other documents that you should prepare as well and some grant others a lot of power so be cautious with your choices.

**Power of Attorney**

There are couple different types, DPOA or Durable Power of Attorney and Medical Power of Attorney.

**Durable Power of Attorney**

ADPOA is an all-powerful document and you need to trust the person who has this document. The reason you need to trust then is quite simple, they can control everything in your life! Simply put, they can control your finances, spend money and leave you on the hook for it. So, there are several sub sections that you can put in to place with a DPOA.

You can have a Conditional, Upon or Blanket DPOA that will grant or limit a person's control of your world.

- Conditional is just that, the DPOA only has power under certain conditions and nothing more.
- Upon is used in the case your death, the person or persons you designate will have total control of everything.
- Blanket, well it covers everything and that person can do anything with your estate. You may have heard horror stories of people los-

ing all of their savings, home and such by a person who has that persons Power of Attorney.

**Medical Power of Attorney**

This is a very specific document as it only applies, when you are unable to make a medical decision due to being unable to make a decision related to medical treatment, like being put on a ventilator or pulling the plug! Kind of extreme but I hope you get the idea, someone needs to make that choice and normally that would be your spouse but what if you were in a car accident and they did not make it, who will make that call?

**5 Wishes**

5 Wishes is a packet that you can get from your doctor's office or online that list your choice or wants that relates to your end of life such as Do Not Resuscitate or DNR, Limit extreme medical procedures to prolong your life, what kind of music you want at your funeral, who you want to do what and more. It is an easy to read and use document and can help your survivors make those decision.

This is just a brief overview of what you need to do before you go . . . Yes, every pun was intended here.

Seriously though, do the work and contact Elder Law of Michigan and *continued on page 3*

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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:

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Battle Creek     | Jackson         |
| Central MI       | Ludington       |
| Cheboygan        | Muskegon        |
| Detroit District | Roger City      |
| Farmington       | Sault Ste Marie |
| Flint            | Southwest MI    |
| 480-481          | Stevensville    |
| 486-487          | Traverse City   |
| 498-499          | Troy Local      |
| Gaylord          | Western MI      |
| Great Lakes Area |                 |
| Mail Haulers     |                 |

The MICHIGAN MESSENGER is published six times yearly, and is the official publication of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, also affiliated with the APWU Postal Press Association.

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

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



LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



by  
Roscoe  
Woods

# Legislative Update

Greetings to all our MPWU Members!

The APWU/MPWU at the national and local level are working with our like-minded members of Congress to pass several bills that will protect our members both currently employed and retired. Some of these bills will strengthen the rights of other public and private sector workers to join and form their own unions. I want to thank APWU National Legislative Director Judy Beard all those hard-working folks on her staff and of course President Mark Dimondstein.

Our current efforts are towards passing the following bills, information was pulled from the APWU National web site:

**The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82, S.597)**

America's seniors have earned their benefits. The sad truth remains that despite their contributions, a law enacted in 1983 has placed an undue financial burden on many senior citizens.

This bill, introduced in the House on January 9, 2023 and Senate on March 1, 2023, would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), which are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce, or sometimes eliminate, Social Security benefits for millions of federal annuitants.

The WEP formula reduces the Social Security benefits of those with pensions from employers who were not required to withhold Social Security taxes, but still qualify for Social Security benefits through secondary employment. This reduction can total up to fifty percent of the pension amount and directly impacts retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) who currently have government pensions.

The GPO is similar to WEP, but affects spouses and widows(ers) of those receiving pensions from employers who were not required to withhold Social Security taxes. This GPO reduction is equal to two thirds of the pension, making spousal and widow(er) benefits equal to only one third of what they should be. Unfairly, the GPO and WEP penalize CSRS retirees that meet the requirements for Social Security benefits and have paid their fair share into the program.

**The Social Security Expansion Act (H.R. 1046, S.393)**

This bill, introduced in the Senate on February 13, 2023 and in the

House on February 14, 2023, would strengthen and enhance Social Security. More specifically, the bill would:

- Raise Social Security benefits by



Roscoe and Amy discuss grievance issues with the members who attended the MPWU Education Conference. photo credit John Greathouse

\$200/month or \$2400/year

- Lift the cap on Social Security taxes for all income above \$250,000
- Increase COLAs by using the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E)
- Reinstitute student benefits for children of deceased or disabled workers
- Make the Special Minimum Benefit 125% of the poverty line.

This bill would increase Social Security payouts, restart lost benefits, and lift Americans out of poverty through forcing the extremely wealthy to pay the same tax rate as the average employee. Because the bill would force the billionaire class to pay their fair share, Senator Sanders estimates that this bill will make Social Security solvent for over 70 years, until 2096.

**The Equal Cola Act (H.R. 866)**

This bill, introduced in the House

on February 8, 2023, would fix this COLA discrepancy created in the 1980s. Under the current system, all COLAs are based on the percent-

age increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). If this increase is under two percent, CSRS and FERS retirees receive the same COLA. However, if the U.S. experiences high levels of inflation, unlike CSRS annuitants, FERS annuitants do not receive their full COLA.

The Equal COLA Act will give both FERS and CSRS retirees COLAs based on the CPI. It is time we stop penalizing our seniors for their retirement system and give fair Cost of-Living Adjustments to our retired federal employees!

**The Richard L. Trumka Protecting The Right To Organize (Pro) Act (H.R. 20, S.567)**

The PRO Act strengthens current federal laws allowing workers to organize and join a union, and laws allowing them to bargain for better wages and benefits. Not only does the bill empower workers to form a

union, it also aids in completing the initial collective bargaining agreement by mandating arbitration and mediation to resolve conflicts.

The bill also clarifies the right to strike, prohibits employers from permanently replacing striking employees, and penalizes employers that violate workers' rights. Monetary penalties, in conjunction with personal liability, will help ensure employers are held accountable for their injustices.

Additionally, the PRO Act would safeguard union elections by allowing employees to vote at a neutral location and refuse to attend employer mandated anti-union meetings. Transparency is also a requirement under this bill, as workers must be informed of their rights and employers must disclose their union-busting consultant contracts.

Regardless of skill level, race, gender, or political affiliation, access to a union increases workers' pay, secures benefits, and creates safer working conditions. The PRO Act will strengthen the rights of workers, increase the financial growth of the middle class, and create an avenue for better working environments.

These are but a few issues the APWU is supporting and actively working to see passed. For a more in-depth explanation and to stay up to date on all these important legislative issues please point and click your way on over to the APWU national web site and look for the Legislative and Political Directors page.

Make sure you are registered to vote and when you do vote make sure you have educated yourself and vote for those that will begin and end their day by protecting your rights to earn a living wage, secure your benefits and protect your retirement.

One last request, please donate to COPA.

In Solidarity.

AREA 11 DIRECTOR



by  
Debora  
Goodacre

## — Stay Safe! —

did not make it to your office, good news, I intend to visit several more soon.

I have received several calls since my visits and resolved several different issues. If you are one of the newly converted PTFs, I ask that you contact me in regards to your Guaranteed hours and being

able to pick up more hours in other offices.

As I write this, the folks in Grayling are experiencing a severe wild fire and my prayers go out to all of you in the area.

Work safe, take your breaks and have a great summer.

In solidarity.

### We Are All Going To Die! So, You Had Better Start Planning For It, NOW!

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they can provide help and assistance for you as well as your parents.

There is also a QR Code below that

will send you to a link of publication by the Michigan Legislature that has lots of information that can help you with a lot of stuff. But the one packet that

will start you on the path is "A Guide to Medical and Legal Decision", so download it and get started today... Tomorrow is never promised!

## EDITOR

# FY 23 Is Winding Up!

by Marti Jablonski,  
Maintenance Craft Director

Good morning maintenance members,

Well, you are 4 short months away from making it to the end of fiscal year 23 and by now you should have a stack of work orders, 4776's, (aka Route sheets), personal notes, signed slips, and all other helpful facts to make your Line H grievance not only complete but winnable!

How many of you are as tired as I am of going on vacation and knowing when you come back you have a weeks' worth of work to do? It sucks seeing that happen but just stay positive and know that with good documentation and dedication to the process you will be rewarded for it.

I will say, just coming back from our

state educational convention, the union is aware and is perfecting and streamlining the process in assisting you. However, you HAVE to do your part! You need to ask for a steward when things are not as they should be and anytime you sign your name to a document (4776) ask for a copy! It is coming to our attention that management is going behind you and things you may have marker "IC" (incomplete), have now become C . . . complete! Weird, did you know you had your very own work fairies to help out? I mean hell, that would be fabulous, because I know I have fish fly season coming up and I will just send them out to shovel them up and power wash the building . . . Oh what are fish fly's aka (Mayfly's) you ask? Well, you see they're these nasty smelling insects that come in droves

in the middle of the night, smell like dead fish, rot in the sun and get maggots if not cleaned up, smash and pop into the ground when stepped on, get brought into the building, last approximately a month and a half or longer, and are altogether a pain in the ass of added work! That yes are not listed on a 4852, but after years of documentation and work orders I'm hoping to have changed that. Yes, you read that right, I can get fish fly clean up added to my 4852. You see I. The national step 4 settlement it specifically says, that only work included in the staffing package can be counted! I can guarantee fish flies are not found in mine and so my hr. or 2 a day will be subtracted, and if they then don't change the package for the next year again, it will continue. You see management has the ability to

change the package every year with just a click or a tap here and there. Do not let them tell you differently, it's just they don't want to have to deal with it. Their boss is on them to cut cut cut... not add add add... which is truly the problem! And, the only way to make them pay attention is to make them pay pay pay! You can get the recycling you do added, picking up of trays and tubs, oh you didn't know that's not your job? Well trust me it's not! But you can get that added! Get a work order from your supervisor or PM and have them sign and date it every time you pick them up! Make them accountable for all the beck and call jobs you do!

Until next Time document, document, document!

Hammer time!

Gotta Bolt.

## AREA 9 DIRECTOR



by  
Dana  
Mclean

## Small Offices Need To Know Their Rights!

In April I made my way out to all the offices I represent in the 493/494 area. It was nice meeting new clerks and chatting with everyone and meeting postmasters that are new. A lot of you had questions and I hope I was able to answer most of them. Most of you know what your rights are but there are some that are still unsure what exactly is the correct way of small offices.

Let's start with the main issue and the cause of most grievances in small offices. The 1260 report. Postmasters in level 18 and below are able to work 15 hours or less 'bargaining unit work'. That is anything a clerk can do. Box mail, window or distribution. Once they put their drawer in at the window, the time is clicking. So, if they put their drawer in the morning but don't actually start working on the window, the time starts when they actually put their drawer in. If they don't report it truthfully there is no way for me to know they worked more without requesting 1412's. I will be randomly checking postmasters to see if they are reporting accurately but if you see a violation, please give me a heads up. Just shoot me a text or email.

The next biggest issue is the 4-hour rule. The new contract states that when a PTF is scheduled, they MUST be scheduled for 4 hours. So, if you are scheduled for 4 hours . . . work the 4 hours. Do UBBM, change box locks, catch up on training . . . whatever but do the 4 hours! If you aren't getting scheduled for 4 hours let me know ASAP! If they have you take a lunch longer than 2 hours . . . you are guaranteed ANOTHER 4 hours. So,

if you come back at 2:30 you aren't being scheduled for 4 hours and that is a violation and I need to know. The whole idea behind this is for postmasters to stop with the BS scheduling 2 hours in the morning and 2 hours in the afternoon. Who can or would want to live like that? Also, PTF's are entitled to a day off during the week. Most of the times its Sunday but if you are the lucky one that gets to work on Sunday (sarcasm) then you are to get a day off during the week.

Most of the offices don't have a custodian so the clerks are given hours to clean. You do not do the cleaning while you are doing clerk work. THEY ARE SEPARATE HOURS. If anyone else is doing the cleaning let me know

because it is clerk work. Ludington should have a custodian but if it's not filled right now it's a clerk's job to work it until it does get filled. NOT A RCA and NOT the Postmaster. They can't clean as a part of their 15 hours.

While I was at the educational conference in Kalamazoo, I spoke with one of our business agents from Chicago and he informed me that if you are in the office and your pm has the day off, you are to get level 7 pay. Anytime you don't have direct supervision, you are to get level 7 pay. I will be filing on this soon because I know it is an issue and some postmasters are already doing it and we need all the postmasters to do it. If you are NOT getting level 7 pay on the days

your pm is gone, reach out to me.

Speaking of the educational convention, I was thrilled to go this year and its great meeting and chatting with other union brothers and sisters. I always learn something new at every conference.

The future of the union is our young members and if you are under 35 the union wants you to get more involved. In October they are having a young members conference in Vegas. If you can go it's going to be inspiring. Check out that info and a lot more on APWU.COM!

I hope everyone has a wonderful, safe and healthy summer. Enjoy your family!

In solidarity.

**Michigan Messenger**  
Deadline for  
**Newsletter Submissions**  
**July 29, 2023**

MPWU HUMAN RELATIONS DIRECTOR



by Keith Combs

# Workers Memorial Day

Brother Keith Combs organized and lead APWU Members from across the state in demon-

strating against the Postal Service to "Stop Confrontations on The Work Floor" & "Demanding Respect".

Working conditions have become more contentious on the workroom floor across the Nation and the USPS, claims the have "Zero Tolerance"

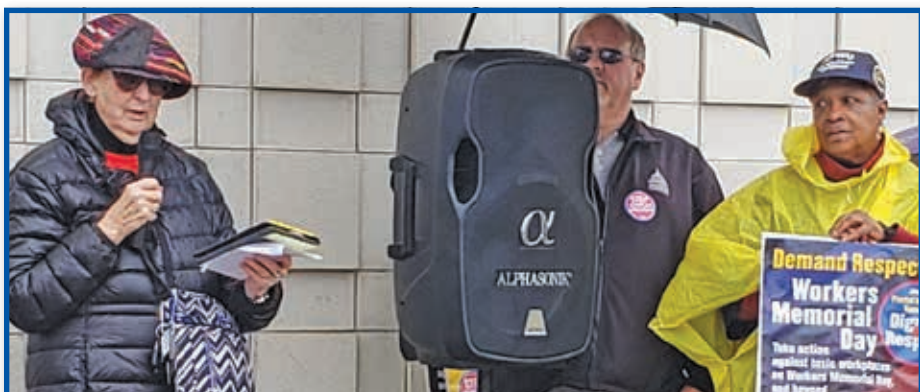
policy, it only applies to the workers and not to management!

A continuing tolerance of this treatment cannot and will not be tolerated by the members!

Change is needed in management to resolve these issues.



photos credit Debby Gorny and Keith Combs



BUSINESS AGENT



by Devendra "D" Rathore

# Absent Without Approved Leave (AWOL)

First, I would like to thank all the attendees who took the time and attended the MPWU Education Conference. I hope everyone enjoyed and had informative classes in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Please stay safe!

**THE DEFINITION:** Absent without approved leave (AWOL) is a non-pay status resulting from a management determination that no kind of leave (paid or unpaid) can be granted, either because (1) the employee did not obtain advance authorization or (2) the employee's request for leave was denied.

**THE ARGUMENT:** The Postal Service's leave policy must be administered on an equitable basis, considering both the needs of the employer and the welfare of the individual employee. The supervisor may not arbitrarily, capriciously, or discriminatorily disapprove leave, thus placing the employee in an AWOL status. Nor may he/her charge every unscheduled request for annual leave or sick leave as AWOL. For instance, if the supervisor is satisfied that a request for annual leave is legitimate, but the employee has insufficient annual

leave, the request should be approved but recorded as Leave Without Pay (LWOP). Or, if a request for sick leave is warranted but not compensable under the sick leave provisions, the employee should be given the option to convert the request to annual leave or LWOP instead of automatically being charged AWOL. Similarly, not every leave request for which advance authorization was not obtained may be charged as AWOL. The leave provisions anticipate occasional requests for unanticipated annual or sick leave will occur. Even a blanket policy that all no-calls or late calls are to be charged AWOL would be inappropriate. Undoubtedly, many no-calls will turn out to warrant an AWOL determination. However, each case must be examined on its own merits. For example, where an employee was incapacitated and notified the employer as soon as he/she was able to do so, sick leave would be appropriate rather than AWOL.

**Tips For The Steward**

1. Before processing the grievance, determine if this was an AWOL charge

based upon a "no-call, no-show," tardiness, insufficient or lack of documentation, or insufficient leave balance. If the issue is a late notification of an absence, determine if the employee reported the absences as soon as he/she was able to do so, as required by the Employee Labor Relations Manual, 512.412. Emergencies, 513.332, Conditions for Authorization, and 515.51, Notice and Documentation.

- 2. When interviewing the supervisor, find out,
  - Why was the grievant determined to be AWOL?
  - Who made the decision?
  - Is everyone who calls in late automatically AWOL?
  - Is this policy that everyone who fails to call in before their scheduled start time is automatically AWOL in writing somewhere?
  - Why documentation presented by the grievant, was unacceptable?
- 3. If the supervisor alleges that the grievant didn't call in, and the grievant insists that he/she did. Ask the grievant who look took the call, the tour of duty, and the time the call was made.

- 4. If the supervisor requested documentation, determine why the grievant failed to submit it. Determine when the request for the documentation was made.
  - 5. Check for discrepancies in management's case, such as improper notations on PS Form 3972.
  - 6. Remember that the grievant has 14 days from the time when he/she first became aware of the AWOL charge to file the contractual grievance. Discipline, if issued, would most likely be issued on a later date, and a different timeline for that grievance would come into play as well as different remedies.
- Documentation Needed**
- > Grievant's PS Form 3971 (Request for or Notification of Absence), denying the leave.
  - > Grievant's PS Form 3972 (Absence Analysis).
  - > Grievant's paystub documenting that the absence was charged to AWOL instead of annual, sick, or LWOP leave.
  - > Evidence or documentation verifying the nature of the requested leave (a
- continued on page 8*

## RETIREE PRESIDENT



by  
Paul  
Browning

# Questions, Some Answers And Paranoia

## Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB)

Hopefully by now APWU members, both working and retired, are aware of the momentous changes that will occur in our Health Insurance benefits on January 1, 2025. The coming changes were a tradeoff of forgiving the pre-funding debt of postal retiree's health care 75 years into the future in exchange for mandating future postal retirees into Medicare. It will be hard to say if this was a judicious deal or not until October of 2024 when the choice of health insurance plans is made available along with their respective monthly premium rates.

In the meantime, representatives from APWU, USPS, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are in ongoing meetings to iron out the details. As usual, Postal Service representatives are up to their old tricks in balking at already arrived agreements and spreading disinformation according to APWU Legislative Director Judy Beard, a member of the Committee working with USPS. According to Director Beard, the latest development is a fact sheet with a USPS letterhead which will be mailed to ALL postal workers and retirees. What surprised this writer is that the fact sheet which required so much Sturm and Drang to arrive at was supposedly a cut and dried issue already. Apparently, the Postal Service at some point said "not so fast".

Nonetheless, representatives from USPS, the four Postal Unions, and OPM did eventually arrive at the below DEFINITE FACTS summarized below:

1.) You will be required to enroll in a PSHB Program during the 2024 Open Season from November 11, 2024 to December 9, 2024

2.) PSHB plan options and premiums will be available in October, 2024

3.) OPM will launch a new enrollment platform for health insurance. Information on how to make elections using the new system will be available prior to 2024 Open Season.

4.) If you are an **annuitant (retired) as of January 1, 2025 and not currently participating in Medicare Part B**, you ARE NOT required to enroll in Medicare Part B to continue your health insurance coverage in the new PSHB Program. Participation in Medicare Part B will be voluntary.

a.) Your covered spouse and eligible family members will also not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B even if they are 65 or older.

b.) **Note:** If you are an **annuitant as of January 1, 2025, and are already enrolled in Medicare Part B**, you ARE required to remain enrolled in Medicare Part B to continue coverage under PSHB.

5.) If you are an **annuitant entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age**

**65) prior to January 1, 2024 and have not enrolled in Medicare Part B**, you and your covered eligible family members may be able to participate in the Special Enrollment Period (**SEP**) for Medicare Part B that starts on April 1, 2024. Those who enroll in the **SEP** will not have to pay the late enrollment penalty. Eligibility letters will be sent to annuitants and eligible family members in early 2024.

6.) If you **retire between October 31, 2024, and December 31, 2024, and are entitled to Medicare Part A (typically at age 65)** you will have the option to enroll in Medicare Part B during a specific eight-month special enrollment period immediately following your retirement date. If you wish to enroll, you **MUST** contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) to initiate enrollment if you are over the age of 65.

7.) As a general rule, spouse and family member PSHB coverage is

Employee Health Benefits Plan (FEHB) in 2024 and don't choose one of the new PSHB plans? USPS will unilaterally enroll you in a plan they chose! And while it's supposed to be similar to the plan you had, who trusts the Post Office on that?

For sure it's a mess of a start-up. OPM has to reportedly spend 100 million dollars to establish a new system for postal employees and retirees to enroll in a PHBP. With literally millions of workers and retirees being covered, its complicated. But here's the projected good news (we hope).

With so many present and future postal retirees enrolling in Medicare Part B, the cost of health care paid by the current insurance plans will be transferred to Medicare Part B. Hence, less money out of USPS pockets and present FEHB plans. So, the reasoning is this will save USPS some very big bucks. Therefore, with Medicare picking up the majority of the tab for medi-

who were about to retire what to expect. Of course, none of these educational efforts would be possible without the benefit of the \$36 yearly dues APWU retirees pay to the National Retirees Department. It's a small price to pay for continuing to support the Union which gave us a decent wage, benefit package, and retirement. I have not always been satisfied with the APWU but it's my Union and I owe it and am loyal to it.

As for the officers of the MPWU, they have my ongoing gratitude. Without State Officers Mike Mize, Darren Joyce, Mike Long, Amy Puhalski, and others, your State Retiree Chapter would not be able to present on its own the classes we do. The fact that the entire State crew is able to work with us as well as conduct their own Contractual education classes for over 100 Local stewards and officers is testimony to their UNION dedication for all members. Thank you again folks. And let's not forget the \$5,000 raised for the APWU Committee On Political Action-COPA! I thank my own Chapter Executive Board members for working our own COPA big screen TV raffle tickets table and raising \$1,250 for COPA.

And one more Big Thank You! to the Southwest Michigan Area Local with Local President Randy Barnes and his lovely wife whose name I apologize for forgetting. The Local's members were everywhere from cooking up a delicious barbeque meal on the edge of the parking lot to procuring plenty of great pizzas in another COPA fund raising event. Hats off you all gang.

One more mention of an old-time Union Brother of mine from the last millennium-none other than the premier former APWU Postal scribe of the 490-91 area Local's newspaper the *Union Flash*, published author, and proud Irishman-Dan Sullivan, who showed up on Friday evening for hospitality. To those of us from the 70's, 80's, and 90's-no one topped Dan in the "must read" category. Us ancients from the very beginnings of the APWU had a great time reminiscing about the old days and the inimitable late National Business Agent Jerome Jerry Bubba Martin. Here's hoping we can read a potential *Michigan Messenger* column from Dan one of these days.

## DeJoy Destruction Maches On

As State Retiree Chapter President, I attend monthly Zoom meetings on retiree matters, legislative issues, and even the current state of USPS/APWU conflicts. It's become obvious that PMG DeJoy intends to plow on with his own dictator leadership style so-called reform plans despite his repeated failures.

After testifying early in 2022 that he expected USPS to break even in Fiscal Year 2023 (begins October 1, 2022), DeJoy testified before Congress in No-



Keith Combs, Ron Krumrie, Debby Szerezy and Vince Nichols.

photo credit to John Greathouse

based on the primary subscriber's eligibility. If the primary subscriber is not required to join Medicare Part B, neither will dependent family members. Likewise, if you qualify for the **SEP**, so will your covered family members.

Well, everybody gets that? Whether still working or retired? Even if you just started at the Post Office last month, or are retiring in a couple of years, or already retired, some of this applies to you. The most important parts above for **EVERYONE** are numbers **1, 2, and 3**. When Open Season 2024 rolls around, you will have to actively choose and enroll in which PSHB plan you want. No more just letting the plan you had last year continue on its coverage without you lifting a finger. You will have to go online, use the telephone, mail, whatever to choose which PSHB you want. And so far, there is no specific instruction on how to make that choice although I would recommend getting familiar with a computer for choosing.

What happens if you are in a Federal

cal bills, the cost savings will be passed down to younger (and hopefully older) workers who are cheaper to cover for medical costs. That's what's supposed to happen, namely, lower health insurance premiums for all. No word on those predictions from the Medicare Board of Trustees that Medicare won't be able to pay out full benefits by 2031.

Bottom line-cross your fingers and watch APWU website and any OPM/USPS contact with a dose of skepticism.

## 2023 MPWU Education Assembly

In conjunction with the Michigan Postal Workers Union, the MPWU State Retiree Chapter staged four successful classes for APWU retirees and prospective retirees. Attendance for all the classes was close to 100 members with many questions asked and answered on topics from Elder Law to Thrift Savings Plans to future retirement. 480-81 Area Local Chapter President and class instructor Joe Gordon did his usual thoroughly informative job of letting those

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CLERK CRAFT DIRECTOR



by  
Wendy  
Kempka

— COPA —

They're so pretty, oh so pretty!!  
The COPA challenge was quite a success once again! The members came through and we were more than thrilled with the outcome! In a very little time, we reached our \$2000 plus challenge to see Presidents Mike Mize



photo credit to Wendy Kempka

and Roscoe Woods, along with Secretary-Treasurer Darren Joyce, look ohhh so pretty in their specially chosen wardrobes and makeup done by a few member makeup artists. The sparkle in their eyes as they strutted their new look for the day was well worth it.

Our members are amazing and the support for COPA in Michigan is outstanding! For the short period of the conference, we raised a total of \$7500! A huge thank you to everyone for that.

There were many new faces this year and we were happy to see everyone getting involved. With the many changes going on, COPA donations are needed to support those that support us and our future. We enjoy getting members involved and making it more than a donation. The baskets, t-shirts, gifts and raffle donations are so appreciated. Every conference or convention that we do, we are getting more and more donations that are reaching out to everyone's likes. Thank you to all of you for that.

Now, just because we have approximately 10 months before our next convention, our wheels are al-



What will these guys do next to raise funds for COPA?

photo credit to Wendy Kempka

ready in gear and the talks for what the challenge(s) for next year will be are already being discussed.

As COPA Captains, we enjoy what we do and we look forward to an exciting challenge for next year! We're

positive that Mike, Roscoe and Darren will agree but let's see who else may volunteer to be part of the action!

In Solidarity,  
Robin and Wendy, Your COPA Captain

Questions, Some Answers And Paranoia

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vember 2022 that he expected USPS to lose 4 billion dollars in FY 2023. USPS acknowledged in late March of this year that USPS had lost 2.1 billion dollars in the first five months of the FY exceeding the expected losses by 75%. The losses come on the heels of increased postage rates (and less mail volume if anyone can see a cause/effect relationship there). Despite all these seemingly fanciful rosy projections proving to be wildly inaccurate, DeJoy still forecasts that with more investment of tens of billions of dollars, he will turn the Post Office into a moneymaker.

Not to be deterred, DeJoy plunges on in a total reworking of the mail distribution network. If you thought the closing of numerous Mail processing plants just a few years ago was a nightmare, get ready for the mother of all slasher post office horror movies. DeJoy plans essentially three levels of distribution with Processing and Distribution Centers, Sorting and Distribution Centers, and everybody else working a couple of hours a day in a local Post Office. He plans for 400 processing centers to be cut to 60 regional mega-sites, has stated a lot of people will have to move and as many as 50,000 jobs will be eliminated. Letter carriers by the thousands will be moved from their local Post Offices to a S&DC. No more stops at the local P.O. What's that do to the clerk jobs there? One can already see DeJoy's justification for cutting Window Services hours. Smaller Post Offices have been hit with hours cut for years now. Indeed, just last month customers and staff at the Downtown

Topeka, Kansas Post Office (Topeka is the State Capitol of Kansas) were met with a sign posted on the door that the office would be closed indefinitely. News reporters from a local TV station that first covered the story attempted to contact the Topeka Postmaster by phone, email, and fax but received no reply.

With letter carriers consolidated into so few operational buildings, making more than necessary round trips, jamming up fewer loading docks with more trucks, it's no wonder DeJoy's latest estimate on infrastructure investment was 40 billion dollars. With a track record of unreliable predictions, it seems like a safe bet that amount will go higher. It also looks like an even safer bet that mail delivery times will be slower and take longer. If anything, DeJoy's "Delivering for America" restructuring seems designed to destroy the confidence and reliability that Americans up until recently had in their Post Office. Once an integral part of the communities they served, DeJoy appears intent on turning the Post Office into just another faceless corporate delivery service.

Already, stories abound from the field of postal workers being treated like any other piece of machinery. Sure, it was like that when I worked but not this bad. Employees working in offices with no running water, having to use porta-johns for bathrooms, freezing temperatures. All on top of the incessant harassment of a tyrannical boss. Rural letter carriers are complaining of pay reductions of thousands of dollars with the catchall route adjustment justification. 14-15-hour workdays for days in

a row. (DeJoy recently stated he works 15 hours a day, seven days a week if you can believe that) The list goes on. National Union officers at APWU HQ in Washington D.C. report stories of Postal officials changing plans and statements they made not just from one meeting to the next meeting but even during the same meeting. These are drastic detrimental actions that will spare no craft under DeJoy.

It was only a few months ago that APWU members were on Zoom meetings listening to APWU President Dimondstein pushing hard for a new USPS Board of Governors to curtail DeJoy's actions. What happened there? Any change with new Board members? **Where's the oversight of the Postmaster General?**

Well, apparently the only Government body now actively looking over DeJoy's shoulder is the Postal Regulatory Commission. The PRC has broad regulatory oversight related to Postal Service price changes, service standards, and service performance. It's an independent Federal agency that was established under the 1970 Postal Reorganization Act composed of five commissioners appointed by the President subject to approval by the Senate.

In April of this year, the PRC announced it was launching an ongoing review of the Postal Service's plans to consolidate and otherwise reorient its processing and delivery network. PMG DeJoy's response was to call regulators an obstacle to progress and that the PRC was standing in the way of his plans for the Postal Ser-

vice. DeJoy also blamed the PRC for USPS problems over the past 15 years, conveniently ignoring the Post Office Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) passed by Congress that went into effect in 2007 with the whole retiree health care pre-funding requirement. Here's DeJoy's own words about the PRC: "What goes on and why they do things they do, I have never figured out. And I'm a pretty smart guy". Arrogant much?

Now I don't know really anything about the Postal Regulatory Commission but I do know I am in favor of some government regulation and not giving free rein to a Donald Trump appointed businessman to do whatever he wants to with the Constitutionally created Post Office. Maybe some APWU National Officer can enlighten us in the field about what, if any, power the PRC has. I think I do recall that the PRC may have been responsible for the old USPS financial plan of raising rates every 3 years with a profit the first year, break even the second year, lose money the third year. That seemed to work out fairly well until you guessed it-Congress and the PAEA.

**ONE LAST WORD ON DEJOY AND USPS RETIREES-** PMG DeJoy has stated that part of the Postal Service's financial woes is due to overpayment into retirement pension funds. Hoo boy. DeJoy already convinced Republicans on legislation to force future retirees in Medicare Part B. Think he can get them to change the retirement system?



by Eric  
Chornoby

**Steward  
Customer  
Care Center  
APWU 480-481  
Area Local**

Most of us live with the Postal experience of, 'the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing' when it comes to Management. As a Steward at the Customer Care Center (AKA Call Center) I have stories for days about postal inefficiencies, but I recognize one area the Postal Service is terrifyingly efficient - Monitoring postal employees. Management is not above using illegal means to monitor you.

### 'Management' Is Not Your Supervisor

I am guilty of this myself. I refer to any EAS employee as 'Management'. The problem is what most APWU Stewards and Officers refer to as Management includes your Supervisor, your Manager, your Postmaster, Labor Relations, the ACO (Attendance Control Officer), the Postal Nurse, the District Manager, and the POOM (Post Office Operations Manager). That is a lot of different people and organizations.

This fact leads to my warnings of 'don't trust management' or 'management is monitoring you' falling on deaf ears. When I refer to Management, I mean any EAS employee, any US Government employee with relations to the postal hierarchy, any non craft employee and/or their representative. That is important as their representative can very well be your coworker.

### Brown Nosing Coworkers

You know the coworker. The Ass Kisser. Always trying to befriend Management to get imaginary brownie points to later redeem for preference for leave requests or 204B positions. Ten years ago this person was easy to spot, they would tattle or spend a lot of time in the Supervisors office. But it no longer is 2013, the snakes are getting crafty.

On more than one occasion I have had to defend an APWU member against social media allegations. Ranging from posting pictures of postal proprietary information, to a customer's information being posted online, or my favorite posting selfies on social media from a tropical island when on FMLA leave. We all know those above transgressions are wrong, but how does Management find out this happened?

Managements representative - your Brown-Nosing Coworker. The way it works is this. You turn in a 3971 and request a Saturday off for your child's graduation. It is denied. On that Saturday you call off for sick leave. Your coworker, who is all up in your business sees you post some pictures from the graduation on Facebook, screenshots and emails this to your Supervisor. Now your Supervisor must request documentation to substantiate how you were sick but visibly out in public. This

# The Postal Service Is Always Watching

is more than a reasonable suspicion. Eight times out of ten, it is a coworker who reports you to Management. Having many negotiations, discussions, and information requests about this same topic I often get Management protecting the reporting employee or snitch. Management doesn't always care. The problem is, once Management knows, they must act.

### When It Is Not Your Coworker, Its Management

What about the other two times out of ten? It is still Management or you doing Managements dirty work for them. Management will use the information you provide to build a case against you, without you realizing it. One easy example is the previously adopted program from 2006, National Reassessment Program. The NRP was officially a program designed to place workers who were injured back into the workforce in jobs they could do. One common landing place was the Call Center. What actually happened?

Management, through HR, re-evaluated every injured employee's case. They also established Reassessment Teams. In several notable cases, Management would request, and re-request Medical Documentation and use the responses you provided to create a new job posting, or preferably say no work is available to get you off the rolls. For employees who did have a job available, Management also created hostile work environments, released personal medical information of employees, and tried to force employees to resign. These are currently EEOC cases (Such as Sandra McConnell, et al. v. United States Postal Service) and class action lawsuits for those impacted which are still unresolved.

Management will also use the Office of Inspector General, which notably has tried to coerce Doctors to admit that your Medical Claims are exaggerated (ECAB FS 11-863, September 26, 2012). Yup, that's true, the OIG was

caught by the Employees Compensation Appeal Board (ECAB) using footage and coercive threats trying to have a doctor change the restrictions they already approved. At this point, most Postal Employees will get a second opinion or follow up, and the Postal Service will repeat the steps until they get an outcome preferred.

Although the Class Action cases may finally be resulting in justice in 2023, the fact remains Management will twist every piece of evidence you submit against you. They will contact your doctor to verify your information, and in some cases try to manipulate your doctors against you. Every time you see that Doctor, their opinion would be tainted and such Doctors often minimize required restrictions.

### But My Coworkers Like Me!

I am sure they do. But the Postal Inspectors do not. Many facilities have catwalks (Ask a custodian for stories about cleaning catwalks, you will learn they get more action than you realize), cameras, and undercover agents monitoring Postal Employees around the clock. We have all seen decoy money, open packages with valuable contents, and so on. Entrapment is a common USPS tactic.

The actual job of the Postal Inspectors is to enforce applicable laws and regulations as they relate to the U.S. Mail, Postal Service Property including funds, as well as the Conduct of Postal Employees. Unfortunately, the Postal Inspectors have been caught red handed with illegal monitoring of American Citizens (and Postal Employees).

One notable way this happened is iCOP, or the Internet Covert Operations Program which came out of The U.S. Postal Inspection Service's Analytics and Cybercrime Department. iCOP was established in 2018 and monitors social media and uses facial recognition software to monitor

US Citizens. iCOP and the Postal Inspectors would use this information for their own investigations, as well as share this information with other Government organizations. That is where this became a problem.

This has already been in court (EPIC vs US Postal Service Case No. 1:21-cv-02156 (TNM)) and the OIG already did an Audit on iCOP in 2022. The OIG determined that the program needed to take steps to ensure the program operated in accordance with Postal Service Regulations, such as protecting personal information and had approval to search in advance.

This begs the question, if the OIG, and Postal Inspectors duties include monitoring Postal Employees and Operations, and they uncover illegal or fraudulent activities, do you really expect they would not notify Management? In my experience, the OIG and Postal Inspectors will gladly provide reports to your local Management when they catch something which violates the CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) or the ELM.

### Management Is ALWAYS Watching

As a Steward at the Call Center I have seen the Postal Inspectors, the OIG, and other federal agencies get involved more times than I can recall. In many cases, Management did not go looking for this information. Your coworker, the OIG, the Postal Inspectors, or a completely unrelated agency will rat on you. It can happen, and it does.

This is not a fear mongering mentality. The reality is that Management, as in the Postal Service, has a plethora of tools to monitor you. And they do. Be careful what you post on social media. If you are sick, stay home. Don't brag to your coworkers about what you do when calling off or banging out as the carriers say. Remember nothing is anonymous online, and I can guarantee the Postal Service has the tools to monitor us than we publicly know.

# Absent Without Approved Leave (AWOL)

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medical problem, an emergency such as repair to an automobile, e.g.)

- > The grievant's statement. This is a must.
- > The clock rings or time cards.
- > Grievant's call-in records, or "Leave Usage Log List Report."
- > Copy of FMLA certification, if applicable.
- > Steward's notes from the interview with the supervisor.
- > Steward's notes from the interview with the grievant.
- > Witness statement(s), if applicable.
- > If the disparity is claimed, PS Form 3971 and/or 3972 of other employees.
- > Call-in records for other employees if the disparity is raised as

an argument.

- > Confirmation call-in number if Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system was used to report the absence.

### The Agreement

- National Agreement and JCIM, Article 10.
- National Agreement and JCIM, Article 19.
- LMOU.
- Employee and Labor Relations Manual, Part 510.

**Special Note:** If discipline was issued, file two separate grievances, one on the AWOL Charge, which is a contract case, and the other on the Discipline Issued, which is a discipline case. Appropriate Remedy

- That the AWOL charge be rescind-

ed and removed from the employee's record.

- That the AWOL be converted to the requested leave (sick leave, annual leave, or LWOP).

When filing a grievance, I want to ensure that all the relevant documents you are arguing with are included in your Step1, Step2, and Additions and Corrections. If you do not receive a Request of Information (RFI) before appealing at Step 3, please argue in the additions and corrections that management failed to provide such information and include a copy of the RFIs the Union requested. The steward must have all the documents they need to support their argument to win cases.

In Solidarity.