

# Michigan

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by Gary  
VanHoogstraten,  
President

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# Economical Crisis Has Major Impact On Post Office Volume And Revenues

The two easiest choices that had to be made concerning our recent state Educational Convention was first, the place. It was a no brainer, for we were north, west, and it was about time we went to the central part of the state. Low and behold, right in the middle of the mitten was Bay City. We have not had a meeting here since around 1984. From the first meeting I had with the people from the Doubletree, I could see that this was a great choice. From the very first meeting, until we left there on Sunday, everything seemed to work like clockwork. From what I overheard throughout the weekend from members, that the convention was a huge success. From the classes, to the instructors to even the accommodations and meals, everything seemed to work flawlessly and it cumulated into a great weekend. One of the bright spots was the number of members who attended this year's convention. We had in excess of 120 attendees at this year's convention, more than any of our Educational Convention that I could remember. This has a lot to say about all of you taking your time out from a busy summer to be here. Kudos to all of you. The second choice that had to be made was that of a person to dedicate the convention and education book to. Jane Duggan, recently retired from the postal service, and last year decided not to run for maintenance craft director for the MPWU. Dedicating this book to Jane was a no brainer on my part. Jane has so deserved to have this weekend dedicated to her for her long hours, traveling to Oklahoma for training, and still having time in her day to assist. Jane is one of the most dedicated Union Members I have ever been around. She has always placed her members first, ever since I have known her. As President of the Michigan Postal Workers, from the Executive Board, and members, I want to say a big "THANKS" from all of us. Words can't explain how much we appreciate all you have done. Enjoy your retirement and I know we will see you at future functions of the MPWU.

The economical crisis of the last few months has had a substantial impact

on post office volume and revenues. The economic downturn comes on the heels of technological trends that have produced declining volumes for single piece first class mail. Currently, only a few legislative proscriptions limit the postal service options. Restrictions on the closing of small or rural post offices also have been enacted as part of the annual appropriations process. As of right now, legislation requires to maintain six day delivery to city and rural areas. The issue

facing congress and the nation is whether the postal service will be able to continue to provide adequate level of service in terms of these features in the months and years ahead. Current laws make the universal service obligation applicable to both the market dominant and competitive products. The postal service is the only federal presence in many urban and rural areas of the US and this presence helps bind the nation together. That mail carrier provides uncompensated support

to the individuals along routes. And that the postal service provides assistance to federal and state authorities, following the Hurricane Katrina disaster. I only hope the citizens remember this and not be afraid when we need their support when the time comes.

In closing, please think the next time you attempt to pay bills on line, because this may be your job you are helping take away.

Until Next Time.



by Michael A.  
Long,  
Editor

## Editor's Report

# Actions Can Speak Louder Than Words

Management never ceases to amaze me. As I stated in my article two editions ago, I am under the definite impression and follow the adage that actions speak louder than words. You can tell me anything you want (remember the old saying that you can tell when management is lying because their lips are moving), but make sure your actions follow what you are saying. But once again, management's actions say we are going to continue to do things like we have always done them, no matter the costs.

Take for instance Audit teams. Management at the District level first and now at the Area level is sending in Postal managers to "watch" and "audit" the employees to make sure things are being done and we are doing our jobs. But as I said above, lets see how their actions translate into words. Words: Management is saying that we are facing a 6 Billion dollar short fall, and we must make cuts at every possible avenue; Action: management continues to spend money to send other managers to watch people, not to mention, paying them Per Diem, Hotel, Travel; for something their frontline supervisors are suppose to do on a daily basis. How about we have management audit management

to ensure they are doing their jobs on the floor? But we are all aware that management protects management, no matter what. As I said before, District personnel come through first, and then Area managers second; if management really wanted to save money, and they must continue to audit, have them choose: one or the other, not both.

While I am on the tangent about them saving money, when is management going to seriously look at the AOs? And no, I am not talking about reducing them. I am talking about getting rid of the Postmasters in every AO, and put a clerk there to do the work. Have one Postmaster oversee maybe five or six Post Offices, but have the clerks do the work and run the offices (like T-6s do in most of the stations in larger cities and report to one supervisor/manager). They will get 40 hours, but at rate less than a Postmaster would. Not only that, the overseeing Postmaster would sort of become a lower level POOM, and that would save about \$75-80K per position. Not only would this save huge amounts of money, it would also put the clerk who is working there at the office, and who is generally from that town, back into the community and drum up

business (Remember when you actually had to be from the town or area to be a Postmaster of that town?). They would also be at the pulse of what is happening, and be able to make things happen as well that is more beneficial for the community and in turn the Post Office.

One last thought, can we at least do something about the Post Offices closing at Lunch (and now the "summer hours" of being closed on Saturday) at the AOs. I have been to a few AOs recently and most of them are closed from either 11 to Noon or Noon to One or so. Hello??? Is anyone out there? We are being told that we need to drum up the business, and when do you think people would be shipping and available to come to the Post Office? Is it when they are at work? Or do you think it is when they are on their own lunch? To put this into an analogy: Let me think, why doesn't the local restaurant close down from Noon to one so they can have their own lunch or close for Saturday while people are out and about and able to stop and make purchases (especially if pay day was the day before)? I don't know about you, but that Restaurant wouldn't have any customers and would probably have to

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by Richard Blake,  
Clerk Craft Director

## Clerk Craft's Report

# Important Issues

**MPWU Educational Convention** — on June 10 through June 14 I attended the MPWU Educational Convention in Bay City. The presentation by National Vice President Cliff Guffey to the general session on Thursday, June 11 was a particularly important one, in that we are about to find out which stations, branches, or associate offices the Postal Service plans to close. As Guffey illustrated, the Postal Service recently made a HUGE change to one of their Handbooks (hoping the Union wouldn't be paying attention, I guess) which seeks to legitimize their (potential) actions in "closing" a branch or station, **only to immediately open a "contract station" in the same location, using all the Postal Service's equipment and supplies, but with no postal employees.** That Handbook change was, fortunately, disputed by the national Union, and we can only hope that the challenge is successful.

On Saturday, June 13 I served as co-instructor (along with National Business Agent Lynn Pallas-Barber) of an all-day beginning and intermediate Steward training class. For the afternoon session we decided to try something a little different, and it seemed like it was pretty successful. We divided the class (around 45 people) into 9 groups, and gave each group a scenario representing a grievance. Lynn and I had designed these scenarios to cover a variety of common contract and discipline situations; some of them were pretty straightforward, while others were a little more tricky. The groups were then given about half an hour to figure out what information needed to be in the case file, determine the appropriate remedy, and write up a Step 2 appeal form. When they finished, one "lucky" representative of

each group had to "present" their Step 2 grievance to either Lynn or myself (acting the part of management's Step 2 designee) in front of the whole class. Some of the groups did a truly fantastic job in picking up on the important details about each scenario, tying them to the correct contract language, writing up their grievance properly, and coming up with the correct remedy. This type of exercise forced the students to think on their own, to learn where to look for the relevant contract or Handbook language, and to pay close attention to the details in each scenario; at least it was more entertaining than just listening to somebody talk at you all day! The purpose of this exercise was to at least try to address the problem of poorly-written or poorly-documented cases being sent to Step 3 or arbitration; our National Business Agents are constantly complaining about this problem. Since this exercise proved to be pretty popular with the students, if there are any Locals out there who think that some of your Stewards or Officers might benefit from this type of "hands-on" training exercise, I'd be happy to help you put on this type of training in your Local. Feel free to contact me if you're interested.

**Reversion arbitration award** — several people had asked me for more information about the recent arbitration award out of Ann Arbor dealing with a reversion, which was presented so well by National Business Agent Linda Turney. That case number is **J00C-4J-C-03096339**. In the text of the award, Arbitrator Cohen refers to some similar cases which were cited by the Union, and which should also prove helpful in fighting reversions. The case is probably not on "APWU-SEARCH" yet, so if someone wants a copy of the whole award, just contact me and I'll send you a copy.

**"Accounts receivable" and letters of demand** — lately we've seen another rash of management trying to get employees to pay alleged debts to the postal service, which show up as "accounts receivable". The problem is, at least in Ann Arbor, in **every single case** where management produced records of an "accounts receivable" (an alleged debt owed to the postal service by a bargaining unit employee), the alleged "debt" **did not exist**. Every one of the "accounts receivable" presented to me corresponded to a letter of demand which had been issued to a window clerk, **but which had been rescinded through the grievance procedure**. Apparently, **not one single time** did the manager who signed the grievance settlement rescinding the letter of demand actually take the necessary steps to make the "debt" go away, such that **years later** the postal service is back demanding that money from the employee all over again. I cannot over-emphasize this point: in **any** situation involving a letter of demand, if you get a grievance settlement rescinding the letter (or modifying the amount of indebtedness, etc.), **keep multiple copies of the settlement in different locations, and always give at least one copy to the grievant**. We were fortunate in that we were able to produce all the necessary records to get every one of these "accounts receivable" deleted, but it could just as easily have gone the other way if our records weren't complete and readily accessible. Remember – the grievance settlement rescinding the letter of demand **isn't necessarily the end of the story**; you could very easily wind up arguing about that same "debt" 5 years later due to management's refusal to take all the necessary steps to **completely** eliminate the "debt" from all postal service records.

In Solidarity.

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:

Alpena	Flint	Muskegon	Southwest MI
Battle Creek	480-481	Petoskey	Stevensville
Central MI	498-499	Pontiac	Traverse City
Charlotte	Gaylord	Roger City	Troy Local
Cheboygan	Hillsdale	Saginaw	Western MI
Detroit District	Jackson	Sault Ste Marie	
Farmington	Ludington	Saint Ignace	

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Any and all correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; fax to: 616-776-1536; or e-Mail to: mpwueditor@yahoo.com

Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

Lastly, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.



CHECK WITH THE UNION!



by John Smeeckens,  
Veterans  
Director

## Veteran's Report

# Clare Veterans' Clinic Open

### CLARE CLINIC

Well it finally happened! On May 08, 2009 the grand opening of the new Clare Veterans' Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic took place in front of a large group of Veterans' and community members. Some of the keynote speakers on hand were Rep. Tim Moore, R-Farwell, along with U. S. Rep. Dave Camp, R-Midland, Brandon Fewins, aide to U. S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, D-Michigan, Assistant Adjutant General of Michigan's Veterans' Affairs Brigadier General Carol Anne Fausone and Veterans' Integrated Service Network Director Michael Finegan. Master of Ceremonies was Gabriel Perez, Director of the Medical Center in Saginaw, Michigan. The clinic was expected to receive their first patient on May 18, 2009. The location of the new clinic is at 11775 Isabella Road, Clare, Michigan 48617.

### CAMP LEJEUNE WATER UPDATE

On June 13, 2009, a committee of the National Research Council (NRC) released a report on its independent review of the available scientific and medical information to determine whether adverse health outcomes are associated with past contamination of the water supply at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina prior to 1987. The report assesses the strength of evidence

associating exposure to trichloroethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PCE), benzene, and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in drinking water to adverse health effects in prenatal children, children, and adults. To download the "Report in Brief," view the full report, or to download a free copy of the executive summary, please visit the **National Academies website**. Additionally, on April 28, 2009, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) announced that they were removing the 1997 Public Health Assessment (PHA) for Camp Lejeune from their website. According to ATSDR, the PHA should have mentioned benzene contamination and stated the extent of exposure to benzene was unknown. ATSDR is currently conducting water modeling as part of an ongoing study to determine if past exposure to VOC's from contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune is associated with certain birth defects and childhood cancers. After the water modeling for this study is complete, ATSDR will re-analyze and update the PHA. Persons interested in reading the 1997 PHA may request a printed copy by contacting the ATSDR Records Center at (770) 488-0707. The Marine Corps is dedicated to taking care of our Marines, Sailors, civilians and their families.

### SET FOOT ON SOIL UPDATE

As most Vietnam-era veterans know presumption for Agent Orange related

health conditions are based upon the member having actually had "boots on the ground" for at least one day. Those serving aboard ships have been divided into two groups. In the Blue Water groups are those individuals who were considered not to have been in country and among the Brown Water group are those who worked primarily on the rivers and are already considered to qualify. A question by a veterans' organization representative, at a previous quarterly meeting, has led the VA to slightly change the rule. Now if a service member can prove that he was aboard a ship that actually tied up to a pier in Vietnam and that can be proved, the member will be considered as being in country and the presumptive conditions can apply. If you or someone you know meets these qualifications and has previously been turned down for Agent Orange related conditions, now is the time to re-open your case with the VA.

### L. S. W.

Lawyers Serving Warriors is a project of the National Veterans' Legal Service Program. It provides free legal representation in disability, discharge and Veterans' benefits cases to service members and Veterans' who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The organization reports it has recruited hundreds of lawyers throughout the country to help in its work. Those lawyers are provided train-

ing on laws governing the military and Veterans' disability benefits programs. The project is operated in cooperation with the Pro Bono Institute and Veterans' service organizations, including the Military Order of The Purple Heart. For information for L. S. W. go to [www.LawyersServingWarriors.org](http://www.LawyersServingWarriors.org), [LawyersService@NVLSP.org](mailto:LawyersService@NVLSP.org), or call 202-265-8305 ext. 152. "For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know."

### VETERANS' HEALTH CARE

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which now has nearly eight million Veterans enrolled in its award-winning health care system, is poised to welcome nearly 266,000 more Veterans into its medical centers and clinics across the country by expanding access to health care enrollment for certain Veterans who had been excluded due to their income. "This incremental approach to expanding enrollment ensures that access to VA health care for a greater number of beneficiaries does not sacrifice timely access or quality medical care for those Veterans already enrolled in VA's health care system," Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health, said. "Over the next four years, we hope to provide enrollment to more than 500,000 Veterans." Under a new regulation effective June 15, VA will enroll Veterans whose income exceeds current means-tested thresholds by up to 10

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# Actions Can Speak Louder Than Words

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close down. Humph??? Sound familiar?

### STANDBY TIME

Many of us in the larger plants are beginning to go on Standby time when there is a lull in the mail. At some locations, there is a room to go into, and at others, you go into the Break Room. Whatever happens, you need to remain vigilant and ensure that if you go on Standby time, it is actually when you don't have any mail or any allied duties to perform. If you are working on the machine, and you hear that management is putting you in for Standby time, make sure you ask to see your steward. Standby time is only when there is no work available. As long as you keep working and keep busy, you are not on stand-by time. Clean up your area, make sure you have the equipment you need to do your run, whatever it takes, but stay busy and stay productive. The job you save will be your own. And one last thing about this, and I am probably going to get a little back lash for saying this, but what

the heck, it is my column and I am allowed to speak my mind. I personally think of standby time as my time. Management has their time (it is when you punch over to 044, 030, 918, 966, 781, etc.) and we have our time (340). If management asks you to do anything, make sure you are NOT on 340, think of it as your time.

### UNIONS AND BANKRUPTCY

In the past month, I have heard that Detroit District schools are looking at possibly filing for Bankruptcy to fix their ailing financial situation. They stated that since GM did it in an expedited manner, that this new model of bankruptcy might help them and allow the schools to shed some of its debt and reopen and/or abolish their labor agreements.

What in the world is happening to the world and the unions alike? We, the taxpayers and consumers, are allowing/watching business rack up millions of dollars of debt, and turn around, file bankruptcy, and wash it all away; and in doing so, the dreams of many of our

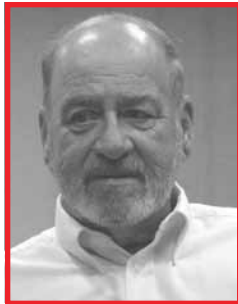
union brothers and sisters who work for them. Some of the companies (although I am not sure yet about the Schools), in turn, give their financial advisors bonuses for performing this dramatic feat. When are we, the unions, going to stand up and say no more? We are more worried about losing our jobs, than we are about standing for what is just, right, and fair. What about all this stimulus money to get the credit markets going? Heck, I don't know about you, but if I was a business supplying anything to anyone, I would demand cash up front. Why would I give anyone credit, since most of the companies can go for an expedited bankruptcy and wipe the debt away.

We must always remind our friends, neighbors, and the places we patronize and send our kids to schools that it is not the union's that got us into the trouble we are now in. It is greed from businesses and management; actually unions have been at the forefront in trying to stop the injustice. We have to remind them that "Union" is not a bad

word. The goal of a union is to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and that together we can achieve more and move ourselves, our community, and our nation as a whole, forward.

On a closing note, I wanted to say how great it was to see old faces and to meet some new ones too at the recent Educational Convention. This convention turned out great. It was truly a "Perfect Storm," when you think that: The instruction was outstanding; the attendees were focused and learning and management will be in a rude awakening when they returned home. To the new steward, one piece of advice that you must always remember: You and management are equals while you are performing as a union representative/steward. You will hear management say: "If I was you, I would do this . . ." or "Come on, are you really going to file that, we can work something out." Remember, the contract was signed by both parties. And both parties have to follow it.

Until next time. Yours in Solidarity.



by Al  
LaBrecque,  
Retiree's Chapter  
President

## Retiree Involvement

# Convention A Success

### RETIREE INVOLVEMENT

**Learning Experience.** From my perspective; the MPWU State Education Convention held in Bay City, was successful in its intended purpose . . . education! As for the State Retiree Chapter sponsored programs; it proved that we're never too old to learn. In my case, however, it also proved I'm getting too old for this stuff! It's time for our younger retirees to seriously consider stepping up to continue what your present State and Local Chapter officers have started. Think about it! If not you, WHO?!

Two programs offered retiree chapter delegates, Local Union Human Relations officers, seniors, and guests of delegates were; The Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, which featured a power point instruction outlining a whole myriad of services available to seniors in Michigan's 16 regions, along with a segment on Medicare, Medicaid. Additionally, an attorney from Lansing based non-profit Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors, a service of Elder Law of Michigan, Inc., available to seniors 60+ years of age for information and legal advice, made a presentation on wills, trusts and estate planning. The value of offering these two programs is that for the first time the State Retiree Chapter sponsored an education opportunity solely dedicated for the benefit of our already retired membership. We've long held that our primary mission as State or Local Retiree Chapters is to provide services to our dues-paying retired members, educationally and legislatively.

The Retirement power point program led by national retirement advocate, Joe Gordon (Local 480-481 V.P), was as comprehensive an instruction on retirement planning as I've seen.

The purpose of the Retirement presentation is to advise active members contemplating retirement, as well as to educate Local Union officers and Retiree Chapter officers and delegates who take the information back to their home Locals and Chapters to be able to correctly respond to member's inquiries on retirement issues. As with all three of these programs; judging from all the questions and comments, delegates were really "into it" in all three classes.

As with any educational program, it is now up to the members who participated in these classes to apply what they've learned at the local level, not stuck in a folder somewhere. In that regard; all the services available to seniors in Michigan through the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging in each of the state's 16 regions is far too extensive to list in these pages. Members of one of our four Local Retiree Chapters in the state should be able to obtain contact information from your Chapter. Members-At-Large can feel free to contact me for contact information in your region. Happy to do so. I should point out that these services are available to ALL Michigan seniors; including member's family members. The same applies to persons age 60 and over for information in contacting the Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors, or by calling Elder Law of Michigan, Inc. **1-800-347-5297, ext. 228.** You will be amazed at the variety of services available to seniors through these two programs; not just for ourselves as aging retired members, but for our senior family members. Check It Out!

I have to say; the State Retiree Chapter would not be able to sponsor such programs without the cooperation, patience, and accommodations of the MPWU State Union and all its responsible officers who allow us to partner with their conventions. I am

likewise grateful to APWU Retirees' Dept. Director, Judy Beard, who did the research in revealing the existence and availability of these programs, and for directing us to them. While I'm at it, long being an advocate of informing and communicating with the membership, were it not for the *Michigan Messenger* and editor, Mike Long, we would not have the means of communicating with our retired membership through this column. This Chapter does not have the resources to publish our own newsletter.

Our Postal Press Assn. member APWU Local and State publications also publish retiree chapter columns which is a form of continuing education and communication with members in the field. As such, retirees are benefitted by remaining connected to their Union now that we are no longer in the workplace. "Going to school" isn't all that occurred during our three jam packed days in Bay City. I had the pleasant opportunity to briefly address our MPWU PPA editor's session led by APWU PPA President, Tony Carobine. As a retired member, I shared three issues that I feel strongly about with our Local editors in attendance: **Hard Copy:** With more and more reliance on the Internet and computer generated communications, it is imperative that Union publications are not shifted from hard copy to some website as a cost savings measure. To do so would break the invaluable connection between our members in the field with their Local and Chapter, eliminating our best means of communicating with the membership. **Local Retired Member Mailing Lists:** All too often, I've discovered that Locals and/or editors fail to maintain a current retiree mailing list. This often occurs when there is the natural course of changes in Local Union leaderships who had no previous connection to retirees, and they are forever lost. Fortunately, I receive a listing of all Michigan members belonging to the APWU Retirees' Dept., complete with their mailing addresses, which I will be happy to furnish upon request. However, a mailing list of ALL retirees, not just Dept. members, should be maintained and local publications sent to them. That's the least we should be willing to do for retired member's years of loyal active membership. **Retiree Department Ads:** Former Dept. Dir., Doug Holbrook, some two years ago, advised that he furnished the list of PPA member APWU editors a copy of an ad to encourage APWU retirees to join the Retirees' Dept. I have seen only one (1) since, and not in a Michigan PPA member APWU publication. It's been a source of consternation that PPA member publications nationwide publish retiree events like breakfast and

lunch gatherings, NARFE meetings and recruitment forms, APWU Auxiliary, P.O.W.E.R. (all of which are fine and dandy), but our own APWU Retirees' Department ads rarely, if ever, appear. PPA Pres. Carobine responded that if such a request came from the Retirees' Dept., he would be most willing to furnish that information to member editors.

**Takin' Care of Business:** The State Chapter E-Board met to take care of business, including the audit report. A motion was adopted to send MPWU Retiree Chapter President to the APWU Retirees' Dept. Conference & Workshops being held in conjunction with the All-Craft Conferences in Las Vegas, Sept. 30-Oct 2, "therefore saving money to be able to send more delegates to the 2010 APWU National Convention in Detroit". If for some reason I am unable to attend, the E-Board will be polled for an alternate to represent the State Chapter.

**Senator Levin On Board!** Michigan Senator Carl Levin (D), has officially signed on as a cosponsor of **S.491; Federal and Military Health Care Act**, popularly known as "Premium Conversion", whereby postal/federal and military retirees would be permitted to deduct their FEHBP and TriCare health insurance premiums from pretax annuity earnings. An aide to Senator Levin advised me that the Senator is likewise favorable to our legislative goal to repeal WEP/GPO; the **Social Security Fairness Act of 2009, Senate Bill 484**, even though he has not yet officially cosponsored, but fully expects Levin will endorse. It is just as important that we contact Senator Levin to "Thank" him for his support on S.491, as it to contact him (or any Member of Congress), to petition their support for our paramount legislation. The Senator's Aide, who is being reassigned to Levin's Washington, D.C. office as Legislative Asst., was fully apprised of the FERS retiree sick leave credit legislation upon which he was well versed as a FERS employee himself. That legislation has passed both the House and Senate and is in Committee conference to reconcile the two versions. The importance of **H.R. 22**, which would relieve the USPS of the huge retiree health benefits prefunding obligation, was impressed upon the Aide as well.

**Troubling:** I'm damned glad to be retired from the Postal Service! After three days of listening to all the trials and tribulations being experienced by our Local Union officers, stewards, and members in today's USPS, I'm grateful that I don't have to deal with all the crap anymore, but that doesn't mean I don't care for those of you who

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## Clare Veterans' Clinic Open

*continued from page 3*

percent. These Veterans were excluded from VA health care enrollment when income limits were imposed in 2003 on Veterans with no service-connected disabilities or other special eligibility for care. There is no income limit for Veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities or for Veterans being seen for their service-connected disabilities. Veterans who have applied for VA health care but were rejected due to income at any point in 2009 will have their applications reconsidered under the new income threshold formula. Those who applied before 2009, but were rejected due to income,

must reapply. VA will contact these Veterans through a direct-mail campaign, Veterans service organizations, and a national and regional marketing campaign.

### THANK YOU

It was great seeing so many of you at the Educational Conference in Bay City. Thanks for stopping by the Veterans' Information table that I had set up in the main hallway.

Hopefully we had the information you needed, available. If not, don't hesitate to contact me, and I will do my best to get it to you, or direct you where to go to get it.

## Legislative's Report



by John  
Marcotte,  
Legislative  
Director

# Postal Service In Crisis

*How the same management that drove the postal service off a cliff now wants to blame the car.*

Recently the newspapers have been filled with the news that the United States Postal Service is in dier financial straights and needs the US Congress to change laws and allow the lowering of service standards because it is in "acute financial crisis". These alarming words were spoken by Postmaster General (PMG) John Potter. I'm sorry that is Postmaster General/CEO John Potter but I will get to that later. Considering the depth of the condition of the US economy at this time, at first glance it may appear to be a valid statement. While some of what Postmaster General Potter said before the U.S. Senate was true, some of it was misleading as well and what the Postmaster General did not say was deafening. Only by looking at the information with perspective can one make a determination of the true condition of postal service and formulate a course of action that will allow the postal service to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First let's look at what Postmaster General Potter did to address the steep financial problems he outlined in his speech to the Senate. When it was proposed in the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) that the Postal Service prepay the high cost of employees retirement health benefits (5.4 billion dollars in 2008) the Postal Service was moot. Potter admits in his statement he thought times were good and he felt that the service could absorb this enormous burden. You would think that when it is proposed to any organization that it will be the only workplace in America to have to prepay its retirees health benefits, the head of that organization would scream foul and predict massive deficits. Yet nothing was heard. However Potter goes on in his speech to outline how the shift to electronic communication over first class mail caused the service to take cost cutting action in 2002. Well which is it PMG Potter? If the Postal Service was in a period of change and needed to reduce costs to balance the budget, why did you not come out opposed to the thought of a *5.4 billion dollar* a year expense added for ten odd years? Even a casual observer could see the PAEA was fiscal suicide for the Postal Service. When you also consider that along with this new gigantic expense the Postal Service's future postage increase were limited to the rate of inflation by this same Act only a fool could not see the perfect financial storm the Postal Service was sailing into at full speed. Looking back on the triumphant announcement of the

enactment of Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act by Postmaster General Potter, it recalls his high praise for this legislation and bright future for the postal service. One has to wonder what the priorities of postal headquarters as a whole really were at this time and the PMG in particular.

One factor that was not mentioned by the Postmaster General was the uncapping of the pay for himself and his "vice presidents" that occurred during this vital decision making period. Not content to have their salary limited by the constraints of public service the Postmaster General lobbied for and was granted a 30% pay raise. This raise was made retroactive to many months prior to approval. When cutting costs is the Postal Services focus why are huge pay raises for yourself and your cronies' part of the plan? This is another instance of unbridled self interest and greed that parallels private sector executive's behavior that contributed to the current economic downturn. The money is not the issue; it is the lack of judgment that comes into question. One only needs to look at the salary and bonuses for the top postal executives from 2002 -2008 along with the number of employees that were allowed to exceed the previous cap on salary for the same period to see if in this time of cost cutting at the expense of service at your local post office how different things were within the beltway in Washington.

In this Act the Postmaster Generals title was changed to CEO/Postmaster General and his salary cap was raised and he was allowed to get bonuses in excess of this cap to be paid after retirement. Since when is a cap not a cap? Allowing the PMG and his vice-presidents to defer compensation is simply a way to circumvent the cap on his wages that Congress intended. Review of the PMG's pay package has his total compensation at over \$800,000.00 for 2008. Such things as the PMG's health care premiums being funded at a much higher rate than other postal workers and federal employees, a fully paid move of his household after retirement and a "extra retirement" fund well in excess of a MILLION dollars are but a few of the perks PMG Potter and his cronies enjoy. It is clear that Postmaster General Potter wanted to copy the corrupt practices of Wall Street in every detail. He changed his title to reflect CEO status, he provided himself a compensation package far in excess of previous PMG's and he ignored the long term health of the organization he is charged to lead for his own short term gain.

The only thing we consistently hear from postal headquarters is the internet has lowered first class mail volume

and revenue is down. This trend was apparent over ten years ago and what solutions has the postal leadership team come up with to be more efficient and generate more revenue? They have reduced service to the public. Earlier collection times from mail boxes so business mail is now delayed a day in getting to its destination, reducing the hours our offices are open to the public making the USPS less convenient to use and closing small post offices that while devastating to the community are a drop in the swimming pool of postal expenses. They have made "partnerships" with our competitors. The loss of **billions** of dollars was the result of the postal services partnership with Emery delivery service. The current deal with Fed Ex gives the postal service the expensive "last mile" of the delivery to houses and destinations and Fed Ex gets the highly profitable bulk long distance transportation of packages. So in areas the postal service had a competitive advantage with similar products they reduced their competitions costs instead continuing to offer a competitive product at a lesser cost. The result is a huge loss in potential revenue for the postal service and what amounts to corporate welfare for Fed Ex. More **billions** down the drain. There has been the ill advised deployment of automation machinery that not only does not save the postal service money it increases total costs in moving the mail. The Tray Management System, APPS and now the FSSP have been a disaster to the profitability of the postal service and all were pushed through by an enthusiastic headquarters staff. These deployments were only stopped when government review outside the postal service forced them to do so because of the tremendous waste.

Now finally Congress is asking CEO Potter some hard questions as HR22 works its way through Congress. The answers they get are the same PR sound bites about huge losses and billions in debt. The service is using the hard times the American people are facing in an attempt to ignore the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA) and accomplish what postal management has longed to do but congressional intervention has always prevented, the lowering of service standards to the American people and the removal of the universal service mandate. When the postal service was created the PRA mandated that service would be universal throughout the country and rural areas will get the same access and services as urban areas *regardless of costs*. This required the service to lose money in small towns and offices but in return the service has a monopoly on first class mail. The service wants to renege on its obligation to the American people but maintain the highly profitable

monopoly. This is another example of the leadership of PMG/CEO Potter and his team, short sighted, with a total lack of integrity, rooted in self interest and with a total distain for the American people whom he is sworn to serve.

So what are we to do? Now is the time to become active in grass roots politics. If left unchecked the current postal leadership will destroy the high standards and network of service that is **the United States Postal Service**.

Contact your federal Congressman's or Congresswoman's office. Ask to speak with their aide for postal issues. Discuss your concerns and how it effects your community. Be specific with examples of lowering service (moving up collection times, delaying mail, reducing window hours), wasteful spending practices (one management vacancy creates 6 or 7 EAS employees on "detail" with its addition costs, expensive equipment that actually costs more to move mail or does not work, transporting mail farther to another facility to sort mail with no savings), and job losses to the community (the paycheck gets exceded with the employee, does the Congressman or Congresswoman want another house up for sale in their district?). Follow up your phone call with a letter. This will generate an investigation in that office or facility.

We hold PMG/CEO Potter and his team accountable for their actions and decisions. We ask our representatives in Congress to investigate into the; questionable purchase of tray management, APPS, FSSP equipment, continued subcontracting of postal work via mailing discounts while postal employees are being paid to not work, the billions lost in "partnerships" with our competition, the moving up of collection times makes USPS management's percentage of on time delivery go up and therefore their bonuses go up but a letter mailed in the afternoon takes two days to go across the street, no way to compete in today's fast paced world, the total lack of planning for the obvious reduction of first class mail and the rampant self interest and greed among upper postal management including total compensation to executives and the cozy relationship between postal executives and the mailing industry.

The USPS needs a new direction with a clear focus on service to the American people, more access to the customer and **real** faster service should be paramount. PMG Potter and his cronies have driven the postal service off a cliff toward destruction and if they are left in place the service will accelerate toward this end. It is a time to put the service back in the postal service. That can only be accomplished by new leadership and a

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## Auxiliary's Report



by Jennifer Amos, Legislative and Communications Director, MPWU Auxiliary

# Educating Our Kids About Unionism

*"Kids don't have a little brother working in the coal mine; they don't have a little sister coughing her lungs out in the looms of the big mill towns of the Northeast. Why? Because we organized; we broke the back of the sweatshops in this country; we have child labor laws. Those were not benevolent gifts from enlightened management. They were fought for, they were bled for, and they were died for by working people, by people like us. Kids ought to know that ....!"*  
-- Utah Phillips

How do we educate our kids about unionism? How do we get it across that without unions there is no secure future for them or their children? In this day and age, kids from union families have immensely benefited from having a parent — or two — with a secure well paid job.

We must pass the torch my friends. We are responsible for educating our kids. The APWU auxiliary does a great job teaching our children about the benefits of belonging to an organization whose primary purpose is to protect their interests. It certainly wasn't always that way . . .



During the Industrial Revolution, children as young as four were employed in production factories with dangerous, and often fatal, working conditions.

Agile boys were employed by the chimney sweeps; small children were employed to scramble under machinery to retrieve cotton bobbins; and children were also employed to work in coal mines to crawl through tunnels too narrow and low for adults.

Children also worked as errand boys, crossing sweepers, shoe shiners, or selling matches, flowers and other cheap



goods. Some children undertook work as apprentices to respectable trades, such as building or as domestic servants (there were over 120,000 domestic servants in London in the mid 18th Century). Working hours were long: builders worked 64 hours a week in summer and 52 in winter, while domestic servants worked 80 hour weeks.

Children as young as three were put to work. In coal mines children began work at the age of five and generally died before the age of 25.

By the late 1800s, states and territories had passed over 1,600 laws regulating work conditions and limiting or forbidding child labor. In many cases the laws did not apply to immigrants, thus they were often exploited and wound up living in slums working long hours for little pay.

Throughout America, local child labor laws were often ignored. On a national level, progress to protect children stalled as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled several times that child labor laws under question were unconstitutional. A subsequent attempt to pass an amendment to the U.S. Constitution failed.

How did our young ancestors fight back?

In 1875 a popular writer of the period wrote, "There are 10,000 children living on the streets of New York . . . The newsboys constitute an important division of this army of homeless children. You see them everywhere . . . They rend the air and deafen you with their shrill cries. They surround you on the sidewalk and almost force you to buy their papers. They are ragged and dirty. Some have no coats, no shoes, and no hat."

The **Newsboys Strike of 1899** was a youth-led campaign to force change in the way that Joseph Pulitzer's and William Randolph Hearst's newspapers compensated their child labor force. The strike lasted two weeks, causing Pulitzer's *New York World* to reduce its circulation from 360,000 to 125,000. The strike was successful in increasing the amount newsboys received by selling papers.

The **London match-girls' strike of 1888** was a strike of the women and teenage girls working at the Bryant and May Factory in Bow, London. The strike was sparked by the poor working conditions in the match factory, including fourteen-hour work days, poor pay, excessive fines, and the severe health complications of working with yellow (or white) phosphorus, such as phossy jaw.

Led by Socialist activist Annie Besant, with the support of Herbert Burrows, the strike began in June 1888. Three weeks later, the factory owners agreed to hire the strikers and end the fine system.



In 1903 Mother Jones organized children, who were working in mills and mines at the time, to participate in the "Children's Crusade", a march from Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Oyster Bay, New York, the home of President Theodore Roosevelt, with banners demanding "We want to go to School and not the mines!" Though the President refused to meet with the marchers, the incident brought the issue of child labor to the forefront of the public agenda.

In 1904, the National Child Labor Committee was organized by socially

concerned citizens and politicians, and was chartered by Congress in 1907. From 1908 to 1912, photographer Hine documented numerous gross violations of laws protecting young children. At many of the locations he visited, youngsters were quickly rushed out of his sight. He was also told youngsters in the mill or factory had just stopped by for a visit or were helping their mothers.

Attempts at child labor reform continued, aided by the widespread publicity from Hine's photographs. As a result, many states passed stricter laws banning the employment of underage children. In 1938, Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, better known as the Federal Wage and Hour Law. The Act was declared constitutional in 1941 by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Act set a work week of 40 hours, with a minimum wage of 40 cents per hour. It prohibited child labor under age 16 while allowing minors 16 and over to work in non-hazardous occupations. The Act set 18 as the minimum age for work in industries classified as hazardous. No minimum age was set for non-hazardous agricultural employment after school hours and during vacations. Children aged 14 and 15 could be employed in non-manufacturing, non-mining, and non-hazardous occupations outside of school hours and during vacations for limited hours.

### CHILD LABOR TODAY

According to recent global estimates by the International Labor Office, the number of working children aged 5 to 14 in developing countries is in the order of 250 million, of whom some 120 million work full time in various jobs often under hazardous conditions amid crude living conditions. A surplus of unskilled workers and low wages have combined to create conditions for children similar to the worst features of factories, mines and mills from the 1800s with minimal chances for education and future happiness.

Info gathered from different sources, including, but not limited to: "The History Place.com and Wikipedia".

## Postal Service In Crisis

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thorough house cleaning at headquarters. Just as this country could not take four more years of George Bush the postal service can not take any more time under PMG/CEO Potter or his ilk. We are not a company designed to make

money for the few in charge we are a self funded government entity for the sole purpose of serving the American people. It's time to stop the Wall Street copy cat insanity and get back to work for the American people.

*Yours in Solidarity and Friendship.*

# APWU IS YOU





by Jennifer Amos,  
HR/Injury Comp.  
Director

## HR/Injury Comp. Director's Report

# Federal Employees' Compensation Act Claimant Query System (CQS)

### OWCP Makes CQS Information Available via ACS/DOL Web Bill Processing Portal (June 2009)

Federal employees now have access through the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs' (OWCP) web bill processing portal to case specific information regarding their own federal workers' compensation claim(s).

The Claimant Query System (CQS) is designed to provide injured workers with 24-hour access to their case file status; accepted conditions; address of record; compensation claim status; and compensation payments, dates, and periods covered.

The CQS also provides specific information on medical billings, reimbursement requests, eligibility and authorization inquiries. To access CQS, employees can go through the ACS-

DOL web portal at <http://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com>.

After selecting the user type "Claimant," they will be directed to the log-in page where they must enter their case file number, date of birth, and date of injury.

A "Bill Status Inquiry" screen will then appear for queries concerning bills — either resolved or in process. Eligibility & accepted conditions as well as medical authorizations can also be checked at this point.

Claimants can then click on "CQS" under "Inquiries" which will direct them to the CQS main page. Users may query one case at a time by entering the 9-digit case file number. Only cases belonging to the user may be accessed.

The first CQS query screen provides the user's identifying information and address of record, case status, accepted

conditions, continuation of pay election, and dates of coverage for Form CA-16 [authorization for medical]. Links at the bottom of the page allow the user to view specific information concerning "Compensation Payments" (comprehensive payment history) and "Compensation Tracking" (status of Forms CA-7 received). A new case file can be queried by selecting the "New Case" link.

### CQS - CLAIMANT QUERY SYSTEM

CQS will allow you to access information regarding your:

- Benefits payments
- Benefits tracking
- Medical Bill status
- Case status history
- Accepted conditions
- Employing agency information
- CA-16 information

To get started log in to the ACS/DOL Web Portal: <http://owcp.dol.acs-inc.com>

Select user type "Claimant" next to "FECA" icon. Accept the agreement and go on the next page. Login using your claim number, date of birth and date of injury.

*You can get your claim number and date of injury from previous letters you've received from the Dept of Labor (upper right area).*

Hit submit. To access CQS data, you will need to click on "CQS" = last entry on left-hand side of ACS Web Bill Processing. Portal under "Inquiries". You will then need to retype your 9-digit OWCP case file number then click "Submit Query".

Use the information on this web site to be proactive — assuring the best results for your claim.

## — Convention A Success —

*continued from page 4*

do. To be sure, retirees have their own set of issues to deal with, legislatively and internally, but I'm not so sure I'd survive in today's workplace and internal Union environment. The incidence of job removals of Local Union Presidents is alarming. I know of four, including one here in Michigan, of particularly effective local union leaders. In my considered opinion, this is where our national Union should be stepping up with all its representation resources, including legal assistance if necessary! Consolidations, excessing, and abandonment of small 1.6b Associate P.O. clerks, mostly PTF's, is deeply troubling!

Requiring our NBA's to discuss Step 3's with their USPS counterparts by phone instead of face-to-face is, in my opinion, unconscionable! NBA's are the backbone of the grievance-arbitration procedures. To water down this critical step in representation in the name of a cost savings measure, is a disservice to the membership. Another "cut" in service to the membership is the elimination of the Congressional Directory published by the APWU Legislative Dept. for each new successive session of Congress as a vital tool for local level contact of their Members of Congress. Maybe it's just me, but our priorities seem to be getting way out of whack in determining where cost containment should occur in the APWU structure. But Hey! What do I know?! I'm just an old has-been retiree. Shut Up!

**Something To Consider:** Harkening back to the 2008 APWU National

Convention amendment to the APWU Constitution to increase retiree member dues \$1.00 per month, which our active member delegates imposed on our estimated 40,000 Retirees' Dept. members who had no voice or vote in the matter save that of our five National Retiree Delegates, who either introduced the amendment, supported it, or dropped the ball in the debate. The "hooks" were that established Local and State Chapters would receive an additional \$1.00 per member, per month increase in operating revenue. At last count, there are 36 Local and 4 State Chapters organized. The \$1.00 per member, per month increase to members not belonging to a Local or State Chapter is dedicated to an APWU Retirees' Dept. organizing fund. Note that I was on record as opposing the amendment to the dues increase.

This State Chapter, as our Sister State Chapters in Ohio, Florida and California, receives \$1.00 per member, per month of the "unrepresented membership" in the state, that being those who do not belong to one of our Local Chapters in the state. I'll wager that neither the maker of that resolution, nor the delegates who adopted the amendment, even remotely considered the consequences of their adoption of that amendment. So, **consider this;** why would State Retiree Chapters be encouraged, or even want to engage in the organizing of additional Local Retiree Chapters in the state when to do so would result in a loss of revenue to the State Chapter at the rate of \$1.00 per member, per month for every retiree

member in the newly organized Local Chapter? In my view, it's just a matter of dollars and sense!

**Penny Wise & Pound Foolish:** My apologies for being so long-winded (again), but this is of time sensitive importance to the active members, particularly those closing in on retirement eligibility. The importance of understanding that you **must be enrolled in a FEHBP health insurance program, AND in FEGLI life insurance, at least FIVE (5) YEARS PRIOR TO RETIRING,** to be eligible to carry coverage into retirement cannot be overstated! Once you retire, and if you are not enrolled in FEHBP or FEGLI, you cannot reenroll later. There are only extreme exceptions. I raise this issue because of the increasing amount of inquiries being received from USPS employees whose spouses work for GM, Ford, Chrysler with UAW negotiated health benefits, and have chosen not to enroll in FEHBP because their spouse has better and/or premium free coverage. An inquiry came from a retired member who did not enroll in FEHBP and is worried that their retired GM spouse may lose their health insurance benefits. I could only tell that member they had no recourse but to pray their spouse doesn't lose their GM-UAW health benefits package. Another from a member who's close to retirement whose spouse announced they no longer wanted to be married, and now the member has to work another 5 years and enroll in FEHBP to be eligible to carry coverage into retirement. That's like a 5

year sentence! The same can occur if a member's spouse works for GM, or another company with health benefits coverage, dies prior to retiring. The surviving USPS spouse, and possibly any children, could be left swinging in the wind.

My advice: "C.Y.A." a.s.a.p.! Enroll in a FEHBP health insurance plan, any of those available, including the APWU Health Plan, **at least five (5) years prior to retirement eligibility!** No one knows your particular situation better than you do. Insurance coverage, health or life, is a very personal choice. To do otherwise may well be "Penny Wise and Pound Foolish" and you don't want to realize that after the retirement door slams behind you!

**Highlights!** To wrap up on a positive note; as always it was a joy to be with "my kind of people" again at the Ed Convention. To interact with many dear, old friends, though the ranks of "that old gang of mine" is rapidly thinning. And, when I see so many unfamiliar, new young faces, and I look in the full length mirror in my room, I have to question; "what the Hell am I doing here?!" However, the crowning highlight was to be able to reconnect and spend a bit of time with favorite son, Brother **Leo Persails**, and share in his wisdom and mouse trap union mindedness. I simply can't help but thinking about the direction our beloved APWU has taken and that; "Man, the voting membership really blew that one!" Just my humble, but honest opinion!

Be Strong!



by Joe  
Wrobel,  
Motor Vehicle  
Craft Director

## Motor Vehicle's Craft Report

# Wheels And Wrenches

As we move into the second half of this year we are once again facing issues that may very well change the future of MVS. In the last couple of articles I talked about the Pilot program that the national agreed to (MOU signed by Burris) that alters the schedules of our drivers. I have been in contact with all of the local presidents that are currently on the list and they all agree that we do not want this program in this state. At the recent Michigan educational seminar in Bay City our NBA (Merlie Bell) and National Assistant MVS Craft Director (Mike Foster) told us that management has now been given a directive that if the chosen area locals don't go along then the possibility of contracting these runs out will be the alternate course of action. It seems that this volunteer program is now a "take it or else" program. This program that the national officers told us that it should only affect 3 areas is now turned into 11 areas. I have said it before and I will say it again that we

need to fight for our jobs by showing the work that we perform by filling out our logs, scanning our loads (or making sure that they are scanned properly), stop at all offices on your schedule and so on. We need to stop letting other crafts do our work. Management is looking at all down time that our runs have and we know that most of the time we are doing other work within our craft (spotting, loading straight trucks and so on) we should document that work. On the other side the mechanics need to write everything down on their work orders, document the road calls and all of the tags that you do.

Excessing has hit a couple of our districts; Our national officers offer the following on our National website as your contractual rights. The entire article is worth reading but I have taken the part talking about art 12 for MVS out to include it in this article. As MVS employees, when you are excessed, you have the right to be placed in any available MVS position for which you are qualified, anywhere in the country. But the USPS has been very reluctant to identify vacant MVS

positions throughout the country that are outside the areas where they are currently withholding jobs.

If you should happen to be an impacted employee and receive notification, you can go on *e-transfer* and apply for jobs in different locations, but you must make sure you have been identified as an impacted employee. This will give you priority over workers who have applied for the same position but are categorized as "regular voluntary transfers." Being properly identified is critical to securing a job and keeping your seniority.

Nobody wants to face excessing, but if you find a vacancy in a location you would not mind moving to, you are entitled to do so. We suggest that after you have been identified as an impacted employee, you make requests not only in the *e-transfer* system, but in hard copy so that you

have a paper trail to show that you have sought these positions.

We have had some negative experiences involving people who were "told" they were going to be classified as impacted employees; however, the USPS excessed them prior to the transfer, so they were classified as regular voluntary transfers and lost their seniority.

Preserving your seniority is critical for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it appears inevitable that all crafts will be impacted as the USPS downsizes. *Maintaining your seniority may be the only way to prevent being excessed a second time.* This is certainly the case for employees who volunteer to be moved in place of junior employees. If you preserve your seniority, it will more or less ensure that as long as the installation survives, you will have a place in the Motor Vehicle Craft.

## Don't Let Them Cut Your Throat!

There is so much disruption on the work room floor with management running amuck, excessing from almost every office. Why would any postal worker expose themselves to being terminated?

Management is out to cut 100 million work hours by the end of this September. They are only half way to reaching their devastating goal. So why do some workers stretch their necks to be cut by an uncaring indifference management?

Dang, I wish I knew! Employees are being fired for Unsatisfactory Attendance because the employees do not protect themselves by being regular in attendance and properly substantiating their absences and fighting back against improper AWOLs.

Employees are being terminated for being off their assignment, outside the building, or inside their cars while on the clock. Workers are being placed on emergency suspension pending removal for fighting or making threats.

Some employees are being investigated by the Office of Inspector General for not properly accounting for postal funds on the windows and face not only termination but criminal proceedings.

Why are these employees letting management cut their throat? It is not worth it! These workers who put their jobs in jeopardy may not even qualify for unemployment insurance

if they actually lose their jobs.

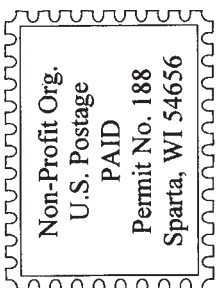
The Union's hands are often tied when employees deliberately expose themselves to termination for misconduct. In the good old days the Union could step in and offer mitigating factors to lessen the degree of discipline.

Those days for the most part are gone. Now the Union has to come in and pretty much find a fatal flaw in the discipline process in order to resolve a removal at the lowest level. We often have to go all the way to arbitration even when we do find those fatal flaws. Gone are the days of reaching Last Chance Settlements. Gone are the days of management compromising on removable offenses.

Management is out to cut work hours, so don't let them cut your throat! Protect yourself. Stay away from conduct that may incriminate you or cause you to lose your job. Do not put your job in harms way. There is no other way for me to put it! There is no other way for me to plead with our members to make sure they help protect their jobs against an uncaring management.

When an employee is disciplined management has to prove the misconduct, that there was a rule on the conduct, and that the employee knew the rule but broke it anyway. The Union then has to show that there was no just cause to discipline the employee. Give us something to fight with. **DO NOT LET THEM CUT YOUR THROAT.**

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