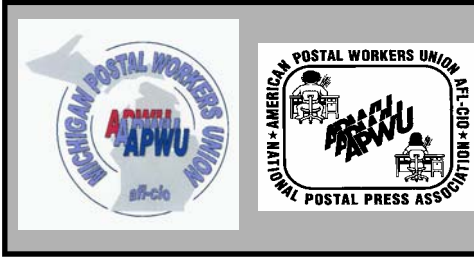


MICHIGAN MESSENGER



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November / December 2004 Issue



President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President



I was reading our National APWU magazine and was a bit turned off by some of the remarks from Brother Guffey. He was quoted "I hope that in the future, everyone will pay more attention to the wording of each resolution and not allow themselves to be swayed by the enthusiasm of the moment." I believe he was directing this toward the "discussion" on the Advocates' Pay during the National Convention. First of all, advocates should not be labeled as 2nd class citizens. They chose to be in this position and have been selected by the Regional Coordinator and the President of the APWU; they should be paid appropriately. I know that they are not a NBA, and that the NBA's do handle major cases, but just because they sometimes arbitrate their own local cases, in my opinion, the locals should not have to pay for their time or expenses. These cases have been certified by National and have been scheduled by the coordinator to advocate for the cases. They should be entitled to the preparation time and for the day of the case. Being a former advocate, I know that many hours go into preparing for the case and the actual day advocating the grievance. National's opinion is

that you have chosen to be an advocate and you should not expect to be paid as an NBA. However, you should be paid for your prep time and arbitration day time. I have never heard of an advocate prepping a case with the grievant and going back to work that same day; or I have never heard of an advocate presenting an arbitration case and if it does not take a full 8 hours, returning to work, if it is in their local. What is Cliff thinking? I believe that since this is not the first time this issue was discussed, that the delegates paid a lot of attention to this resolution long before it was brought up on the Convention floor. In fact, as many of us know, there were National Business Agents that spoke on the convention floor at the mikes concerning this. If Bill wants to make more cuts, make them elsewhere and not at the expense of the advocates and the grievance procedure. Well that is enough on this subject.

Congressional action on postal reform appears to have been halted by the Bush administration. Now that Republicans have increased their numbers in the House and Senate, believe me, Bush will continue with

his "attack." Two postal reform bills in the last session of Congress, S2468 and HR 4341 that dealt with this issue and many others died and will have to be reintroduced after the Congress reconvenes in January. One reason why Congress may not have addressed this issue before the election was that transferring this obligation to the Treasury Department would have increased the federal budget deficit. One of the Directors from a non-profit mailing company stated "Now that the election is behind us, we trust that the postal oversight committees will take up this issue and end this stamp tax." He also said he hoped Congress could take care of this during the lame duck session, because when the 109th Congress convenes, they are going to have a lot of priorities before them. The President of the Association for Postal Commerce said: "Overall, to push for postal reform in the new Congress, mailers and others must be focused and unified." And as we all know by something President Burrus put out was the appointment of Carolyn L. Gallagher to the USPS Board of Governors. Postal workers may remember Gallagher as the chairwoman of the Workforce Subcommittee of the Presi-

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Education at Work

Mark W. Hart
Director of Research & Education

At the Traverse City District meeting, President Gary VanHoogstraten appointed me to fill the position of Director of Research and Education replacing Lynn Pallas-Barber who was recently elected to a NBA. I would like to congratulate Lynn on her election and I am sure that she will do an outstanding job in this position. I will do my utmost to carry on the fine job that she did.

For those who do not know me, I have been around for a long time but I have never held a position at the state level. I am in my sixth term as President of the Flint Michigan Area Local, and I have held many positions including Arbitration Advocate. As President and advocating grievances, I have experienced working with all crafts. I have worked and represented small offices and stations. I believe that this experience will help me in the performance of all the duties of this position. I am excited and looking forward to filling this position. I believe that education is the backbone of any Union. The state of Michigan has always been in the forefront of their training and I will take pride in continuing this effort. I will be working closely with Gary on getting the Educational Convention set up and if anyone has any suggestions they will be greatly appreciated.

In closing I would like to thank Gary for this opportunity to the Michigan Postal Workers Union and I will do so to the best of my ability.

In Unity,

Mark



**THE DEADLINE FOR
SUBMITTING ARTICLES
for the January/February 2005
Edition of the
MICHIGAN MESSENGER
is January 15th**



The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor

Another two months have passed, and another District Meeting has come to an end. I would like to thank the Traverse City Area Local for hosting the recent District Meeting at the Waterfront Inn. It was well planned, well executed, and overall a wonderful experience; but we expected nothing less from the Traverse City.....they come through each and every time. Also I would like to thank everyone that taught at this meeting. The classes were great and from the feedback that I received, everyone left knowing more than when they came. What more can you ask?

Before I get into this article much more, I would like to apologize for the lateness of the last edition of the Messenger. I held up the messenger to get the National Election results in it for a week, but after it went to press and the mailers, I found out that the Postal Service had changed the way Standard Mail was processed. Standard/Non-Profit (e.g. Messenger) is sent to the BMC to be processed. From the date of this paper being delivered to the Postal Service on October 25th, most members received their copy on November 4th or 5th. That was over 10 days just for items in Michigan. I could imagine how long it would take if it was mailed outside the state. Now I see why customers complain about our service with Standard mail. With all the automation now in place, it should never take this long.

As you will notice in the News Brief, if you need Dental Insurance, now is the time for you to get it. As the Dental Administrator for the Western Michigan Area Local, I am extending this offer to every member of the Michigan Postal Workers Union. Check the website for more information if you are interested.

In closing, with snow now arriving, please be safe in everything you do this year. Whether it is snowmobiling, skiing, or just driving to work, I would like to see you all in the Spring. I would like to extend best holiday wishes to you and your family. May this time of the year bring you closer to each other and the ones you love.

In Solidarity,

Mike



Clerk Craft Report

Bob Maloney
Clerk Craft Director

Well, I am still in mourning from the National election. I knew that it would be close, but I really thought that it would be Kerry by a nose. Now, we will have to live four more years under Bush. Now my first fear is that he will be coming after us Postal Workers with both barrels fixed on our jobs, but maybe I am wrong. He said that he would try to reach out to the middle and work with us. However, at the District Meeting in Traverse City, I brought this question up to our NBA John Clark in the open forum on Friday. Bad news, he informed us that just two days after the election was over, the big mailing companies have requested from the President that they want to discuss discounts and other favors. This means for Mr. Bush to give them what they want, he is going to have to make cuts somewhere else in the Postal Service. Any ideas where that might be? My firm belief is it is going to be the employees and their wage package. In other words, look for more on Postal reform sometime in the near future. They may call it by another name, but it will be the same battle that we just fought.

In the last Messenger, several State officers talked about the National Convention held in Los Angeles. Well, I was also at that convention and there was one thing that bothered me too. Not about the debate over the length of time for a term as National officers or how long between conventions, but something a lot smaller. At the L.A. convention hall, which is huge, the Postal Service set up a mobile Post Office for the delegates to send stuff back home, so they didn't have to lug it on to a plane. It was a good idea, and at the last two conventions, they had the same thing. However, a fellow delegate discovered and then brought it up that on the convention floor that a Supervisor was working this window along with two window clerks. This issue was addressed to the National President, who in turn turned it over to the Vice President, who turned it over to the National Clerk Craft Director, who in turn, gave it to his assistant. There was so much laughter about this on the convention floor; for a contract violation took place right in front of the most powerful union representatives and they couldn't stop this Supervisor from doing clerk work. I checked each day when I came into the hall and he was still there doing bargaining unit work. Oh, he started to wear a win-

(Continued on page 5)



Area 2 Report

Christopher Ulmer
Area 2 Director

I apologize to all areas director, state board members and especially to the state MPWU membership for not writing an article before now. It is truly a honor to be in this position and I take it as well all unionism very seriously.

The National elections is not behind us, I don't want you to think that way for one second, in fact it's just the opposite. The battle starts now for 2008 and we who are concerned about the future must start working now. One of the first things we as union brothers and sisters must do is be open to one another and continue to be there for each other when we disagree. Organized labor (the Union ((all Unions))) is the leaders of democracy for the free world. We (the Union) must do a better job of reaching not just our members but to reach and convert non-members into dues paying members in all locals. This must be done to strengthen and KEEP the benefits we now have and enjoy. Non-members must know that the struggle continues and the U.S. Postal Service and the Discount mailers would love to take these hard fought for benefits away. This is just one of the many things members and non-members must become aware of and members who work or know a non-member should make it their personal crusade to enlighten them by once you finish reading your Union literature or even before reading it you should allow them to experience it, not just once but until you get them to sign up as a member. Until we (the Union) get all members involved we will continue to dwindle and lose all kind of political clout and respect.

Again I would like to apologize for this being my first article and I do promise to talk about postal issues next time. I just felt it too important not to talk about our National Elections because 2008 starts now and things must improve for our voice to be heard and followed.

In Solidarity,

Chris





Area 3 Report

Richard Blake
Area 3 Director

Thoughts on the November election - many of us initially felt shocked, stunned, and demoralized at the results of the November election; within a day or two, however, information began to trickle out which then led to feelings of outrage. If people were wrongly discouraged – or even prevented – from voting, or if legitimate votes were miscounted or not counted at all, then the question must be asked if this was really a “free, democratic” election, or a right-wing coup? Among some of the disturbing aspects of this election were – the bizarre divergence between the exit polls (which showed Kerry leading in states like Florida and Ohio through most of the day) and the final vote count extremely unusual disparities in various counties in Florida between voters’ self-identification and the votes reported; in one county, 88% of the registered voters were registered as Democrats, but over 60% of the votes went to Bush many precincts in Ohio where the voter “turnout” was over 100% of the registered voters (sounds mathematically impossible to me) one precinct in Franklin County, Ohio with under 600 registered voters reported almost 4,000 votes for Bush precincts in Ohio which had seen huge numbers of newly-registered voters were given fewer voting machines than in 2000, resulting in lines up to 9 hours long around 36 million of the votes were cast on paperless electronic voting machines, votes which cannot be verified, audited, or recounted due to the technology.

As if these “anomalies” aren’t troubling enough by themselves, let’s also not forget that – the CEO of Diebold, the company which manufactured the electronic voting machines used in Ohio and other states, stated in a fundraising letter to his fellow Republicans that he was “committed to helping Ohio deliver it’s electoral votes to Bush...” (perhaps he made good on his “commitment”) the most bizarre anomalies in the Florida votes, such as the county where 88% of the voters were registered as Democrats but over 60% of the votes went to Bush, were in precincts using Diebold optical-scan voting machines the Ohio Secretary of State (the official charged with overseeing the state’s elections), the man who made the decision to provide fewer voting machines to those precincts which saw a big increase in voter registrations, is J. Kenneth Blackwell, a right-wing Republican. The Diebold corporation has donated almost \$350,000 to Republican candidates

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On September 19, 2004, the National Associate of Retired Federal Employees held their annual Save Our Annuity and Retirement Breakfast in Southfield, Michigan. Many Postal and Federal Employees were on hand to listen to Senator Debbie Stabenow, but also John Dingell’s wife concerning Reform and, at that time, the upcoming elections. Here are some pictures of that event.



(Continued from page 1)
President Report Continued

dent's Commission on the USPS, which recommended to Congress to:

- a. Create a Postal Regulatory Board that would determine the "comparability" of postal pay to private sector pay and eliminate any postal premiums;
- b. Require Postal Unions to bargain for federal pensions and healthcare benefits, which currently are guaranteed by law;
- c. Consider severing postal workers from federal pension and healthcare programs;
- d. Change the ground rules for contract negotiations, reducing the time period for negotiations and mediation and employing a "final offer" mechanism
- e. Limit the rights of injured postal employees

So we can see this is going to be a continuous fight for ALL postal employees. This includes non-members and also supervisors alike. We are all in the same boat regarding this fight and we should be able to fight this battle together.

I know by the time this paper is in the mail that we will be well into the winter months. I hope all of you have a Happy Holiday season. Please do be careful while you are driving the roads here in Michigan and wherever you travel this winter.

Until Next Time



Gary Van Hoogstraten
President
Michigan Postal Workers Union

(Continued from page 3)
Clerk Craft Report Continued

dow clerk shirt, but the other window clerks would point him out. But one day when I checked, the clerks said they didn't know who he was. In other words, someone told them to keep their mouths shut, even though he was still working that window. Now if the four top officers of our Union can't stop management from doing our work at a National Convention; what chance do we have in filing grievances at the local level when supervisors do clerk work. Oh, on the last day of the convention, when I asked a National officer about my concerns, I was told that the President of the Los Angeles local was told of the problem and he was going to file a grievance on it. Now there is one buck that was passed by many hands.

In Solidarity,

Bob

(Continued from page 4)
Area 3 Report Continued

over the past 10 years (over 100 times more than they've given to Democrats) Robert Reich, President Clinton's Secretary of Labor, has stated that electronic voting machines can be easily hacked or rigged to produce false results. Many independent computer scientists, such as Professor Avi Rubin of Johns Hopkins, Dr. David Dill of Stanford, Dr. Peter Neumann of SRI International, and Dr. Michael Shamos of Carnegie-Mellon University, have stated their opinions that the paperless electronic voting machines are simply not secure enough given the importance of a presidential election; Rubin recently stated to the federal Election Assistance Commission that "I do not know of a single computer security expert who would testify that these machines are secure".

Citizens' trust in the sanctity, fairness,

and honesty of elections is nothing less than essential for any country which calls itself a "democracy". If there is even a remote possibility of fraud in the election, then we as citizens, and as Unionists, must call for an investigation. Just because there hasn't been much coverage of this story in the "mainstream" (corporate) media doesn't mean that everyone asking these questions is some kind of conspiracy-freak, babbling about black helicopters and alien abductions. Fortunately, Representatives John Conyers, Jerrold Nadler, and Robert Wexler have called upon the GAO to investigate these issues; we should all be contacting our own Congressional Representatives urging them to support their call for an investigation. We should also sign MoveOn's online petition for an investigation (www.moveon.org/investigatethevote); we can stay informed about the progress on this issue at www.blackboxvoting.org, www.helpamericarecount.org, and many other places. This is truly the most important political issue of our time; given the incalculable damage that could be done to our livelihoods, our economy, and our planet by four more years of reckless right-wing extremism, we owe it to ourselves, and to future generations, to stand up and assert our rights as **citizens** of a democracy rather than **subjects** of a right-wing emperor.

In Solidarity,

Richard



News In Brief

TSP has a Toll-Free Number

According to a local newspaper article last week, the Federal Retirement Thrift Saving Board has finally introduced a toll-free telephone service for TSP participants.

The toll-free service can be used to obtain account or transaction information 24/7, or you can speak with a service representative from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday.

The number for the USA, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands is 877-968-3778. The hearing-impaired should use 877-847-4385.

Payment of Sunday Premium

The APWU has been informed that payment to employees as a result of the "Sunday premium" settlement will be in the paychecks for pay period 26, to be distributed on Dec. 17, 2004.

The settlement provided that any employee whose regular schedule included a period of service, any part of which was within the period between midnight Saturday and midnight Sunday, including those employees on court leave, military leave or continuation of pay (COP), who was not paid Sunday premium for each hour or COP, military leave, and court leave during those periods of service from February 2000 through the present, as a result of disputed changes to the Employees and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) made in calendar year 2000, shall receive payment at the then-current rate for Sunday premium not paid

New Stamp Rate in 2006

The U.S. Postal Service will seek approval for a 10 percent increase in postage rates early next year, according to a report published Wednesday. First-

class stamps, which have risen 12 percent since 2001, would increase to at least 41 cents, the Wall Street Journal reported in a story on its Web site. The last price increase was in 2002.

Buy Union-Made for the Holidays

Before you start your holiday shopping, visit <http://www.ShopUnionMade.org>. Take a look at all the fine union-made gifts you can buy online: Artwork, cards and posters from Northland Posters and Syracuse Cultural Workers; books and magazines from Powells Books, Charles Kerr Publishers and Really Big Coloring Books; candies and chocolates from Ghirardelli, Hershey, Russell Stover and Sees; New Era fitted sports caps; clothing of all descriptions for men, women and children from Union Jean & Apparel, Justice Clothing, No Sweat, Union House and Excelled Sheepskin and Leather; Weinbrenner shoes; Pendleton wool products; Union Built computers laptops and desktops; Jackson & Perkins roses and Union Plus flowers; Union Roast coffees; Lenox and Fiesta fine china; sterling silver flatware from Gorham and Kirk-Steiff; kitchen and hunting knives from Cutco, Corwin and Camillus; Sharp microwave ovens; glassware for kitchens and dining rooms by L.E. Smith and Fenton; Alberto Culver hair care products; Louisville Slugger wooden bats; Hasbro/Milton Bradley puzzles and games; Testor model kits, paints and airbrush systems; all-union vacation packages from UnionVacations.com and a Hawaiian cruise on "The Aloha," a luxury liner of Norwegian Cruise Lines. Free electronic "buy union" greeting cards and information on where to find and buy hundreds of other top-quality union-made items also is available.

Dental Coverage

Western Michigan Area Local has opened up its Dental Plan for all members of the Michigan Postal Workers

Union. To find out more: costs, coverage and to print out an enrollment form and deduction form, go to MPWU.com and click on the Dental Link. You must be a member of the American Postal Workers Union (either Active or Retired) to join. Hurry if you want to join, applications must be received by December 15, 2004.

OWCP Time counts towards Retirement

The MSPB recently issued a favorable ruling granting FULL retirement credit for all time spent on OWCP rolls, provided that the employee was officially carried on the USPS rolls as a Full-Time Regular. See the board's decision at http://www.mspb.gov/decisions/2004/hatch_bn030056i1.htm. This has implications for others as well, such as part-time local officers.

Please notify retirees who had OWCP time of this important decision. They may have been shorted retirement credit like this appellant was.

TEs and Casuals can NOT work the Window

Following a Step 3 settlement from the San Francisco Region. I have had discussions with Rodney Lambson of the USPS Labor Relations regarding whether Casuals and TEs can be assigned to the window. Management takes the position that casuals and TEs cannot work the window. Rob Strunk

Pay Raise

APWU represented workers on Nov 27 will receive a 1.3 percent increase in their annual salaries. The increase will be based on wages as of Sept. 13, 2003. This is the second increase under the 2002 contract extension that is based on the 2003 salary level.

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Position is Currently Vacant

MPWU Historian, Debbie Brand

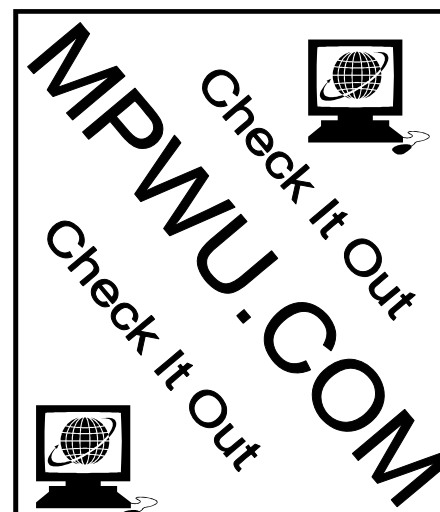
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Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

In addition, 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



Upcoming Events to Plan For:

February/March 2005 - Area 1/2/3 District Meeting, Detroit, MI

June 2005 - MPWU Educational Convention, Radisson Hotel, Kalamazoo

August 10 - 13, 2005 - National APWU Postal Press Convention, Reno, NV

April/May 2006 - MPWU Biennial Convention, Detroit, MI



Area 10, 11, & 12 District Meeting, November 5 - 6, 2004

Traverse City, Michigan - Waterfront Inn.



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