

Michigan Messenger

AFFILIATED WITH: AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO, APWU POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION, MICHIGAN STATE AFL-CIO & MICHIGAN LABOR PRESS

Volume 34, Issue 138

September / October 2008 Issue



President's Report

Gary VanHoogstraten
President



The 19th Biennial National Convention of the APWU was full of energy, challenges, and sometimes, somewhat heated; but hopefully, most of us felt the way I did coming out of the convention, which was UNITED. On the first day, the first speaker was AFL-CIO Executive Vice President, Arlene Holt-Baker, delivering a very moving speech. In a very inspirational speech next was the President of the National Association of Letter Carriers, William Young. He had the delegates on their feet during most of his speech. I know that the APWU News Bulletin that was printed during the convention was sent back to the locals while we were at the convention. It goes more into detail of what the speakers on this day discussed. After President Young's address, APWU President William Burrus gave his State of the Union. He reminded us of one of the largest cost of living raises that we have ever received, in the amount of \$1,477. I do not believe that giving at least \$10.00 or more to COPA would hurt any of us. So please, each and every one of you give what you can to this fund. With the elections just weeks away, we need to get behind our candidates and COPA funds are needed. President Burrus also spoke of the VERA

that has been offered. In plain words, he is telling us not to take this proposal. Make the Postal Service pay if they want you to retire early. Make sure that there is some sort of incentive for you to go early. He also spoke of the jobs that are at stake and how we have to protect them. He was quoted as saying "Together, we must wage a campaign to preserve mail service for all Americans." He also told us of what direction we were heading towards.

Tuesday and Wednesday mornings before the convention, we met with the President from Illinois and their delegates for a caucus. The Michigan and Illinois delegates have been meeting for many years together and we come out of these caucuses united on most of the resolutions. We discussed many key resolutions and we were offered direction by NBA's from the clerk, maintenance, and motor vehicle craft. In another first, President Burrus came into our joint caucus. This is the first time that I can recall that we have ever had our National President address our caucus.

During the convention on Wednesday, Senator Barack Obama ad-

ressed the convention via satellite. He stated: "It is time to bring about real change that working families need..." he continued, "...That it is time you elect an administration that doesn't choke on the word 'Union'." He spoke of the importance of strengthening the Family and Medical Leave Act. He also said he does not believe in denigrating public service by privatizing good public jobs every chance the current administration gets. At the end of his address, the 3,200 delegates unanimously passed Resolution #147, endorsing Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States.

On Thursday morning some 1,000 delegates went to picket three of the "Goin' Postal" stores in Las Vegas. "It ain't no joke" that these stores use this belittling statement of the Postal workers and I believe we got the word out as to how we felt about these stores. Thursday afternoon and Friday morning we were presented with more Constitution Resolutions. There were many heated debates in our discussion. Michigan had submitted over 60 of these resolutions to the National delegates. One resolution that came out of Minnesota was the one that placed the

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)
President's Report Continued

Support Services Direction on the National Executive Board. This has been a longtime coming, but so deserving. Another resolution that was close to my heart was the one that passed allowing us to do a second round of surveys on the small offices. These 1.6.B surveys were done three (3) years ago and they are way overdue. The small offices are getting their butts kicked and we need to revisit them. The rest of Friday, we dealt with resolution from the rest of the committees. All in all, I can say that the convention went fairly well. I am sure that you will see many articles from officers throughout Michigan in their respective local papers.

Lastly, we are currently looking for someone to serve the remaining term as the Area 3 Director. This position represents the Members at Large in the 483 area. If you live in this area and would be interested in performing this vital role, please let me know.

As we wind down to the end of summer, and look towards the beginning of fall, I hope each of you had a safe and enjoyable summer, and have fun with the abundant fall festivities approaching.

Until the next time,



**THE DEADLINE
FOR SUBMIT-
TING ARTICLES
for the November /
December Edition
of the**



The Long and Short of It

Michael A. Long
Editor



Like all good things, History repeats itself once more. The Michigan Messenger is no exception, just like the historic drop in the Stock Market. We have once again changed our printer to accommodate and capture the better rates with the Postal Service. Our other printer could not accommodate us with the folding of our paper to the letter size rate to ensure that we receive the lower cost, and in turn, save you, the member, money.

In my last article, I alluded to changes that might happen with the Messenger and requested your input in an attempt to save money. I receive quite a few responses from you, and as an Editor, knowing someone is reading what you are writing is one of the best acknowledgements that one can receive. All but one of the responses I received stated that the members would like to continue to receive the Messenger at their houses, in their hands. It is with this knowledge that I have begun to look elsewhere to reduce costs (e.g. change the size of mailing, different paper stock, etc.). Thank you to those of you who responded. Your input made a huge difference.

Elections...Democrat vs Republican. Which is better for the union and for jobs? I am not going to sit here and lecture you on which party you should belong to or which one you shouldn't. Neither party is perfect. Both parties are in league with lobbyists and people of such caliber that, for me, makes my skin crawl; however, there is one party that is better on jobs and union, and for that reason, the delegates at the National Convention endorsed Senator Barack Obama. I know I am probably going to get flack from some of you as

to the amount of negative Republican "information" in this edition; however, unlike what one writer stated that we can't have a one-issue vote; in this election, it might just be that one issue that is the primary factor. Is it going to be the issue of the "Economy?" Most likely. It is going to be the issue of "Iraq?" Less and less likely. Is it going to be the issue of Religion? Once again, I would have to say not likely. But let's digress for a moment and discuss the economy. While the one writer says we shouldn't vote for one issue; let's take a moment and look at one issue...the Economy. What does the Economy mean to you? For me, it isn't a one issue thing; the Economy "issue" encompasses a broad spectrum of items: from Labor, to Wall Street, to the Bank Industry, to Manufacturing, to Gas and Oil prices, to Global Trade, and Tax Breaks to those companies. I have just finished watching a commercial for one of the Presidential candidates; like many of them before, which one is better? Democrat vs Republican. Just remember to vote on November 4th. Vote like your job, your livelihood, and your freedom depends on it. Because, guess what?...it does!

Until next time, I hope you all have a great fall. Please remember that any updates, information, and photos from activities are available on the website at www.mpwu.com.

Be safe and be strong in solidarity,

Mike



Veteran's Report

John Smeekens
Veterans Director

HAPPY VETERANS' DAY 2008

To all my Brother and Sister Veterans' I say "Welcome Home," and most of all "Thank You" for your service to this great country of ours. Without your sacrifices, we would not have our everyday freedoms and rights that we enjoy here in these United States of America. And on this Veterans' Day, take a moment to hug a Veteran on this, their Holiday, and tell them "Thank You." For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know

SESAME STREET

The traumatic experience of a young child's Mom or Dad being deployed leaves a lot of little children with fear in their minds wondering what is happening. Sesame Streets' Elmo, along with his slew of friends, will be at 43 different military installations putting on a live show to help the kids understand, along with their parents help, what to expect while a parent is deployed. They are given DVD's with lots of good tips as to what to expect. To find out when and where Sesame Street/USO tour will be playing at a base near you, access the tour schedule at www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc, or call 1-800-342-9647 for an information kit. These kits are available to active duty military, National Guard and Reserve families, schools, child care programs, hospitals and rehabilitation centers serving the needs of military families.

THANK YOU AIRLINES

Did you know that when service members were going overseas on commercial flights, they were being

charged \$100.00 for their third bag? Here we have service members going overseas to fight terrorism and fight for freedoms of oppressed people, and our airlines want to charge them a fee for bringing a third bag filled with essentials. Well the VFW at the National level went and spoke to the Air Transportation Association and explained the burden that was being put on our service people, when paying this extra \$100.00 fee. So Air Tran, Alaska, American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, Hawaiian, Horizon, Jetblue, Midwest, Northwest, Southwest, United and US Airways have all agreed to grant a waiver of the \$100.00 fee for military personnel traveling on orders. Thank You VFW and all the aforementioned air carriers.

DAV MEMORIAL

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial is a project that has been underway for several months now, throughout the United States. For more information you can go to www.avdlm.org. Just recently, Ross Perot donated \$3 million dollars to the fund, representing \$1 dollar contributed for each of the 3 million living disabled Veterans. Mr. Perot said "so much is given every day by our men and women in uniform, and so little is asked of us in return. "Their courage endures" is more than a tagline; it's a badge of honor worn by millions of disabled veterans. The memorial is our opportunity to ensure their sacrifice is not forgotten. I am proud to be part of this effort."

HAND SALUTE

On April 4th, 2008 a bill was passed as part of the Defense Authorization Act (S.3002, section 1081) that permitted Veterans' to render the hand salute in lieu of placing the hand over the heart at appropriate functions. Shortly

thereafter, the authors of the bill became aware that the National Anthem was overlooked in the original wording. It has been recently reported that Senator James Inhofe is attempting to introduce legislation that gives Veterans' and active-duty personnel not in uniform the option of saluting the Flag during the playing of the National Anthem. I will keep you apprised of any and all information regarding this issue as soon as it becomes available.

SSFOA

Silver Star Families of America organization was founded for the purpose of establishing a service Flag and Banner to honor our wounded military. It is their wish to remember, honor and assist the wounded of the Armed Forces. They primarily do this by issuing Silver Star Banners and Certificates to all the wounded that request one. They also serve on the VAVS board and support VA's across the states. SSFOA defines wounded as: Any Armed Forces personnel either currently serving honorably or those who have served honorably from any war, who having served in a war zone have been wounded by enemy action or who have been injured or contracted a serious illness that could be rated at least 10% disabled by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. All wounds, injuries or illness must have originated in a war zone. Purple Heart recipients, victims of friendly fire, those who suffer from PTSD, Agent Orange effects and Gulf War syndrome. To honor the thousands of wounded having served in all branches of service, OIF, OEF and all past wars is the zeal, the basis of the SSFOA. In addition to sending Silver Star Banners, volunteers man a PTSD hotline, send letters, cards, and packages, while committees oversee ways to reach the wounded across the USA thru their many programs. Their desire is that none go unnoticed, and

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)
Veteran's Report Continued

that all are honored and remembered for their sacrifices while fighting for our nations freedom(s). Silver Star Families is an all volunteer 501(c) (3) tax exempt nonprofit public charity. The Silver Star Banner is from the heart and soul of America. It is a symbol of remembrance and honor for the sacrifices made by our service Men and Women; their blood sacrifices, PTSD, TBI and illnesses incurred while honorably serving in a warzone. For years they have been self supporting, but now they need your help, especially with the amount of wounded service Men and Women coming home. Please consider making a donation to this worthy cause. For a brochure, please contact me through the 480-481 Area Local, and I'll get one out to you. Or for more information go on line to their web site at www.silverstarfamilies.org.

MEDALS

So do you know where your service medals are? Are they in some old shoe box in the basement? Well dig them out, get some BRASSO, and get to cleaning them. A recent press release, from the DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs), stated that the Veterans' Pride Initiative, which began in 2006, is asking all Veterans' to wear their medals on three holidays a year. Wear them on Memorial Day, the 4th of July, and on Veterans' Day. If you don't have access to a PX or BX you may want to try to get a one time free replacement set of medals from the government. All you need is a copy of your DD-214 and a Form 180 to send in with your request. You can get the Form 180 and assistance in trying to get your medals from your County Veterans' Representative. Or if you'd like, you can contact Medals of America at 114 Southchase Blvd., Fountain Inn, South Carolina 29644, or call toll free to 1-800-308-0849, or go on line to www.usmedals.com and request a catalog. THEY HAVE IT ALL PLUS

SOME. Wear your medals with pride, you're in an elite group of 26 Million Veterans.

VASSAR SOLDIER HONORED

The Corporal Christopher E. Eskelson Post Office, in Vassar is the new name of the Vassar Post Office at 203 N. Main. The office was renamed in Honor of the fallen Marine who died on December 28, 2006. The 23 year old squad leader served with the 1st. Battalion of the 24th Marines in Iraq. There was a dedication ceremony at 10:00AM on the 19th of August at Veterans Memorial Park. The bill, H.R.2276, was sponsored by Congressman Dale Kildee, D-5th District. The bill was signed into law by President George W. Bush in November 2007. Corporal Eskelson was the son of Michelle Hill, an employee of the Vassar Post Office.

WEIDMAN SOLDIER BURIED

Army Sgt. 1C Gregory A. Rodriguez, 35, a 1991 graduate of Mt. Pleasant High School, was killed in action in Ana Kalay, Afghanistan, on Tuesday September 02, 2008. Services are planned for Mount Pleasant, but they have not yet been scheduled. His wish was to be buried in Arlington "among the best and brave", said his wife Laura Rodriguez.

He was assigned to the K9 unit of the 527th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th MP Brigade, Ansbach, Germany. His dog Jacko survived the attack and Laura said she hoped the dog could come live with the family. In addition to his wife, survivors include their three young children and his mother Virginia Richardson of Lake Isabella. He was a native of Weidman in Isabella County.

John

Human Relations Report



Jennifer Amos
 Human Relations / Injury
 Compensation Director

Re: OWCP Website Resource

Local Presidents and Members at Large

I am delighted to be working with you as the Human Relations Director for the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. I am approaching my position with enthusiasm and passion; making myself available to you and your members when needed.

It's difficult to navigate the sometimes murky waters of an OWCP claim. It's my goal to act as a lifeline; assisting you and your members in filing and obtaining an accepted claim.

To realize this goal, I've added a page to my local's web site that will provide step-by-step instructions/advice for each of the major OWCP claims. Please visit mpwu.com and click on "OWCP Info" to access this site and review the useful resources available. Information gathered from this web page could potentially help our member file a claim from start to finish; all the while avoiding the bumpy waves of uncertainty and confusion.

I was concerned, since taking office last May, about how I was going to assist APWU members throughout the state of Michigan. It was an ominous responsibility, but I'm pleased to say I've been able to lend a hand to many of our state members with

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)
Human Relations Report Continued

everything from simple questions to composing letters for them to send to their doctor or the Department of Labor. To accomplish this, I communicated VIA phone and email as well as leading them to the website for research.

When I receive calls from members of a local I instruct them to notify their local president as soon as possible and then follow up to make sure notice was given.

Presently, the biggest threat to our injured members is the National Reassessment Process. Most of Michigan is gearing up for Phase II where employees will be identified for further consideration of the process. Please visit <http://www.apwu.org/dept/human-rel/hr-injurycomp-phase2list.htm> to review the latest news and our union's effort to protect its members.

Please don't hesitate to call me for assistance at (616) 776-1489 or email me at injury-comp@mpwu.com.

I look forward to talking to you.



Legislative Report

John Marcotte
 Legislative Director



You can't handle the truth!

That is what I think is the problem with politics in America today. Disgusted with a government that is out of touch with the American people many Americans have become polarized into single issue voters that refuse to see the big picture. As more and more citizens tune out the debate and focus only on their pet issue the country suffers. As your Legislative Director I have heard several single issue reasons to support one candidate or another. The truth is none of these single issues are valid reasons to support a candidate for President of the United States.

Let me go through some reasons I was given to not vote for Obama in this fall's election.

- o "I'm pro-life and Obama is pro-abortion". First off I know of no one who is pro-abortion but even if a candidate is pro-choice this opinion will never be called into question. Why? Because Congress has had over 30 years to take up the debate and pass laws on abortion since the Supreme Court judgment that voided state laws restricting this procedure. They have placed exactly zero bills in front of any President to sign into law or veto. With all the concerns facing Congress over the next four years they simply will not take up the debate on abortion. While many of us have strong opinions on this subject it is simply not an issue our next President will face.
- o "I'm a gun owner and Obama will come take my guns." The thought that the next President will be powerful enough to push through an amendment to our Constitution removing our right to bear arms is flattering but ridiculous. The recent Supreme Court ruling affirming the individual's right to bear arms has clarified our rights under the law. Needing two thirds of Congress to vote for and three fourths of the states houses to ratify into law a Constitutional change is an overwhelming obstacle. As a gun owning avid hunter I am not concerned in the least about my right to keep and bear arms. This is another emotional issue while compelling is not an issue for our next President.
- o "America is not ready for a black President, Obama will never win". To not vote for a candidate that shares your interests in recovering America and restoring our middle class because of racial concerns is insanity. I really don't care if a President looks like me, but he damn well better think like me. Dr. King had it right when he asked us to view the content of a persons character not the color of someone's skin.

(Continued on page 6)





Wheels & Wrenches

Joe Wrobel
Motor Vehicle Services
Director

Our National officers have posted the following on the National website and I thought that I would include this information in this article

I hope that everyone had a safe and enjoyable summer. As the summer went on we constantly heard of some changes that are coming in the way the USPS conducts business. I would like to share my opinion on some of these changes.

Management across our state from all districts is looking for ways to reduce their budget (this is a code word for screw the craft employees). As MVS craft employees, we have to make sure that we get credit for the work that we perform. This means that the drivers should and must inventory everything that is on the truck. If equipment does not have a bar code, it can be coded manually. Check with your local MVS craft directors and local expeditors. Mail and equipment can be scanned in manually. If a load is delayed for any reason get the late slips filled out or report it so that we don't get the blame for the delay. When you pull a run for a contractor who can't do their work, be sure that your MVS Craft director or your steward contacts the transportation manager so that MVS gets the credit for their work. It is very important that Postal Vehicle Service employees get credit for everything they repair, haul, tow, file or touch. Drivers need and are required by law to do a pre-op and post-op inspection of their vehicles, so do the inspections and write it down in your log, drive safely and account for everything that you do. Mechanics need to enter all work on the work orders. One of the best ways to combat contracting out our work is to show that we can do the work cheaper and better when allowed to do so.

Drug Test Rule Changes The Department of Transportation has implemented drug-testing rule changes, possibly as a reaction to the results of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. The GAO found that a lot of cheating was going on and attributed it to a lack of enforcement of rules. The most disturbing finding we saw in the GAO report is that owner-operators notified of their failure on a drug test were not given any mandatory time out of the driver's seat. We're hearing from the field that in many mom-and-pop operations, drivers test positive and never miss a day on the road. However, on Aug. 25, 2008, the GAO will attempt to enforce the rules making it mandatory to observe specimen collection for return-to-duty and follow-up testing after a person has tested positive for drugs. While this may seem to be an infringement on your privacy, it is our understanding that only those who have previously failed a drug test will be so tested. (We have yet to discuss this with the Postal Service, but it appears that management has taken a proactive step, at least in the Western Area, to make sure all medical personnel are aware of the new rules.)

If any of our members fail a drug screen remember that our national APWU officers and the Postal Service agreed that the USPS is responsible for the cost of the initial treatment by a substance abuse professional of an employee who fails drug and alcohol tests, where management decides to retain the employee (pre-arbitration settlement dated April 18, 2006, resolved a dispute over the issue.).

Two of the VMF's in our state have managers who are insisting and keeping track of ERT times. The first thing that we need to remember is that these times are just that: **Estimated Repair Times**. Furthermore the PO701, section 344.5 specifies that "employees must use pertinent manufacturers' flat rate time schedules as guides in developing and entering estimated repair times (ERT) in the absence of individual vehicle maintenance programs." **Managers or supervisors may not unilaterally develop ERTs.** If problems continue, all I can do is recommend that your craft director or steward files a grievance to prevent any harassment from management on this issue.

Thank you and be safe

Joe W.

(Continued from page 5)
Legislative Report Continued

At our Bi-annual Convention in Las Vegas your national delegates chose to endorse Barak Obama for President. This was done for several reasons. Among these his willingness to restore the Department of Labor to its' mission of protecting workers not management, to sign into laws the pro labor bills that are moving through Congress, to stop bad trade agreements like NAFTA that steal American jobs, to hold accountable the companies engaging in shady financial practices and in general stop the beating the American middle class has taken and work to restore it as the backbone of America it is. These are reasons to vote for President of the United States. These are the issues to inquire about when evaluating a candidate. Vote your family, vote your job, vote your children's future and vote smart. Whatever you do, VOTE!

John



Area 5 Report

Joanna Atkinson
Area 5 Director

First I must apologize for the shortness of this article. We (Area 4 Director Laura Bullock, and Area 6 Director, Mary Stephenson, and I) have been trying to get a district meeting planned prior to the end of the year; however there simply wasn't a hotel that could accommodate us at this time. While I suggested that we could always let people pitch a tent in our back yard, that idea didn't seem to go over very well. So the NEW plan is to attempt to establish a meeting in January of 2009. As this meeting becomes finalized, information will be posted in the Michigan Messenger and on the website. While we preferred to have it sooner, instead of later, this delay also provides you a chance to voice what kind of training you would like to see. So if you have any ideas, contact Mary, Laura, or myself and we will do what we can.

On a different note, the elections are fast approaching. VOTE, VOTE, VOTE. I don't think any of us want another four years of the same. So this is your chance to make a difference. I know we are really lucky. We all have a good job, good pay and good benefits, but think about your neighbor, brother or sister. How are they doing? What about the clerks in the small offices? Hours are being cut a lot. The postmasters or OIC's are working more and more clerk work. Will it ever stop? I doubt it, but we MUST continue to file grievances and make our voices heard. I realize that it is hard to do when you are in a small office, but now is the time to stand up and make the call to your union rep. We are here ready to help, but we have to have your help. You MUST be willing to step up to the plate and write a statement on what is happening in your office. It is your job that is at stake.

I hope everyone had a great summer. I know it went way too fast for me, but I guess that happens as we get older. I can be reached at 989-865-7924, after 1pm, as I work midnights; or you can call me on my cell at 989-295-5454. Please leave a message at either number and I will call you back.

Thanks,

Joanna



Retiree Involvement

Al LaBrecque
Retiree's Chapter President

APWU National Convention. The most significant retiree related resolution adopted as a Constitutional amendment was an APWU Retirees' Dept. member one-dollar (\$1.) per month dues increase....\$24. per year to \$36. Keep in mind that it took a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the some 3,000+ delegates. The same delegates who voted down a fifty cent (\$.50) dues increase for themselves!

Several other retiree resolutions were offered and rejected, including our resolution to conduct APWU Retirees' Dept. Conferences in conjunction with the off-year All-Craft Conferences. The sketchy information I have on that issue is that this resolution was rendered moot by an action which moved the All-Craft Conferences to pre-National Convention conferences, and presumably so will the Retirees' Dept. Conferences. So, we're back to square one on that one. But, the "good news" is that we're going to have more money to work with, and perhaps to be financially able to send more delegates. By "we" I meant the 36 organized Local and 4 State Retiree Chapters! You see, the \$1. per month, per member of Local and State Retiree Chapters dues increase will be wholly rebated back to the Chapters. The \$1. per member, per month dues of those Retirees' Dept. members who do not belong to a Local or State Retiree Chapter will go into a specified Retirees' Dept. organizing pot. That was the 'carrot'!

So, why wasn't I in favor of the \$1. dues increase? After all, that's 'only' a dollar per month, \$12. per year. Local Chapters and our own State Chapter, who have had to operate on very limited rebate funds, will profit. What Chapters will do with that windfall remains to be seen. However, that's not the point. Think about it. With only 36 Local and 4 State Chapters, how many of the estimated 40,000 Dept. members who don't belong to a Chapter profit? A bimonthly magazine, a nickel & dime \$5,000. accidental death & dismemberment policy, and incessant appeals for COPA? They get that now, and that's about all! Yet, our delegates to the 2008 APWU National Convention voted by at least a 2/3 majority to increase their dues for a promise of nothing. That \$1 per member monthly dues increase dedicated to an organizing fund should grow astronomically. How it will be applied is anybody's guess. Actually, the \$24. per annum retiree dues of 40,000 members far exceeds the Dept. budget, and dues rebates to Chapters. Where does it go? Into the APWU General Fund, of course. There already was plenty of cash to

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)
Retiree Involvement Continued

mount an aggressive organizing campaign. In spite of a previous resolution to coordinate retiree and Chapter organizing efforts with the APWU Organizing Dept., nothing ever materialized. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if this infusion of dedicated funds will turn that Department Director's head now!

Another effect of this \$1. per month, per member dues increase is that it negates a State Retiree Chapter's incentive to organize Local Chapters in a state. For every Local Chapter in a state that is organized, existing State Chapters will lose \$1. per member, per month for each retiree member of the newly organized Local Chapter. I'll bet neither the author nor the voting delegates thought of that! While the WMAL resolution to increase the dues rebate from national from 40% to 65% was probably too ambitious, I also believe it was the most reasonable formula. A 25% rebate increase by national probably doomed it anyway. Maybe 50% would have fared better. But, I was told that Jim Lingberg, the Western Region Retiree Delegate appointed by Burrus (Jim was the Maintenance Division Director prior to his retirement) stated: the national would not be in favor of rebating more money from the APWU General Fund. He was probably quite correct. I would argue that those monies are OUR dues dollars! The APWU Retirees' Dept., unlike other APWU subordinate bodies, is NOT subsidized by the APWU and is, in fact, financially self-sufficient! But, it's a done deal for now, and as a done deal I'm concerned that this dues increase, nominal as it may be, will have a counter effect on retaining the current membership levels, as well as organizing new members or Chapters.

There were other significant retiree resolutions, some good, some not so

good. One resolution submitted by the Tampa, FL Local (and Chapter) was to permit retiree member's spouses to be eligible for Retirees' Dept. and Chapter membership and eligible to run for Department and Chapter offices. That was the ONLY retiree resolution the Constitution Committee concurred on. If there was a silver lining to the 2008 Convention, this "bone" the Committee threw to retirees was defeated by the delegates. We have an APWU Auxiliary that is open to spouses, sisters, brothers, etc. We are a "Department" of the APWU. Locals wouldn't think of allowing non-postal APWU spouses to pay dues or run for office. So, the delegates did make a wise decision to reject this one. Another resolution submitted from California was to permit one full dues-paying retiree from a Local or State Chapter to be elected as a delegate to National Conventions. Except for those retirees who pay full dues directly to national, a full dues-paying retiree member of a Local has the right to be elected as a delegate from their Local anyway. It should also be noted that of 40,000 retiree members, less than 500 pay full dues to national, many of those are either Local, State, or national officers, or have their dues paid by their Local. However, the Constitution Committee and delegates once again demonstrated their determination to deny retiree members a voice or vote beyond the 5 elected National Retiree Delegates to the National Convention. Frankly, I wasn't passionate about this resolution one way or another.

Three resolutions addressing fair compensation for the 5 elected National Retiree Delegates, as in paid Level 5, Step O, or equivalent of the Level and Step held at the time of retirement, for the days and time spent in Convention and other assigned duties was likewise soundly rejected by the Constitution Com-

mittee and delegates. Included in those resolutions were proposals to expand the description of the duties of the 5 elected delegates to that of retiree representatives in their respective Regions at authorized APWU functions, which would have included organizing. Those proposals were similar to resolutions we have submitted in past Conventions, also soundly rejected each time. The irony about these 2008 proposals is that they were authored by Eastern Region Retiree Delegate, John Richards, Pittsburgh....the author of the \$1 dues increase resolution. We fully supported the resolutions to fairly compensate the Retiree Delegates, and to expand their authorized duties as retiree representatives. Yet. Brother Richards was far more elated that his dues increase resolution was adopted, than he was disappointed that proposals to recognize Retiree Delegates as our representatives and properly pay them for their work were defeated. Go figure!

As indicated in my last column, I was unable to attend the pre-Convention Retirees' Dept. Conference, or any part of the Convention as a 'back of the bus' observer. However, when I saw the makeup of the Constitution Committee, and then their reasons for concurrence and non-concurrence on retiree resolutions, I knew it was just going to be more of the same...rejection of any gains of substance. I do not consider a dues increase a "gain" for the 40,000 retiree members...just the Chapters who will profit a buck a month for each of their members. Yes, that includes Michigan's Four (4) Local Chapters and this State Chapter. Posts on 21cpw.com, the unauthorized APWU member website, suggest that I'm an odd duck for opposing a dues increase that will boost our Chapter's revenues. So maybe I am. I cannot, in good conscience, support increasing the revenue for just 36 Local and 4 State Re-

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)
Retiree Involvement Continued

three Chapters at the expense of a vast majority of our 40,000 dues-paying who do not belong to a Chapter and will be paying the freight, nominal as it may be for the individual member, but pretty lucrative at the receiving end.

Most of my information concerning the 2008 National Convention has been second-hand, or read on the 21cpw website. However, a non-retiree related issue that was addressed by the delegates and put back on the priority table was to continue to pursue 1.6b small office Clerk Craft staffing and the surveys to establish baselines in those Associate Offices to preserve those bargaining unit positions. It will be interesting to see the minutes of the Retirees' Dept. Conference, and the Official Proceedings (minutes) of the 2008 National Convention, on the debates on our retiree issues....who spoke for or against. That will tell the rest of the story. As one prominent retiree stated; "How can the active delegates to the National Convention vote to increase retiree members' dues, and the retiree members have no voice or vote in the matter?" Oh, wait a minute! We DO have 5 elected National Retiree Delegates each with a voice and a vote so the APWU can continue to collect retirees' COPA money!

Be Strong!

Al

I COULD HAVE BEEN A REPUBLICAN

By: Leo Persails

Retired Central Region Coordinator; Flint Michigan Area Local Member,

I could have been a republican if all I did was listen to what they say. Things like how they love the country and how they hate taxes and abortion. The Republican Party says nobody supports the military like they do. I love what they say, until I watch their actions. I just can't equate their words for a love of military or opposition to abortion and taxes, to what they have done over the last 8 years. They lost me during those 8 years when among other things they destroyed our industrial base.

Next, the way the Republican Party fought to deny our returning veterans additional benefits, was almost as bad as when they attacked a decorated war hero (John Kerry) over politics, and said he didn't deserve his medals. That couldn't be the Republican Party doing that could it? Attack a decorated war hero? Deny returning war veterans needed benefits? That really isn't the love for the military they said they have. If you send Americans off to war, you have to take care of them when they return.

The Republican Party has had control for the last 8 years, but it was even worse during the first six years when they had TOTAL control. They really lost me during that 6 years when they had TOTAL control of the Presidency, the Congress, and the Judicial system, and not one law was passed to stop abortion. They apparently didn't have time to deal with abortion for the 6-year period. Wait a minute, I loved

what they said and they got millions of votes for what they said about it. How could they not have changed it? Where was the religious outrage?

The first six years shows the Republican Party was too busy giving tax breaks to corporations. Tax breaks to build factories in China and other cheap labor countries. Those were American factories in China that made and sent back poison to American children. It was Chinese workers working for American companies. The same companies that received tax breaks to go there during the 6 years of TOTAL control by the Republican Party. Those tax breaks enticed companies to dump American workers for the vision of more profit on foreign soil. It has also destroyed our industrial base while actually making our enemies stronger. Can we actually provide the necessary weapons to our military when the next war comes, or will we have to get them from China?

Tax cuts for Americans? They may have lowered taxes for someone making a lot more money than I was, but I paid more taxes during that 6 years of TOTAL control than any other time in my life. How do you give tax breaks when your expenditures are tripling the national debt? That question is a better description of their claim to cut taxes. You can't create bills and then pay them with tax cuts. How do you fund a war that costs 10 billion dollars a month by cutting taxes? It will take

(Continued on page 10)



Learn about great savings at www.UnionPlus.org/Savings

©2008 UAW

(Continued from page 9)

I Could Have Been a Republican Continued

generations of new taxes before that debt is paid. It's just a matter of which group of Americans will pay that bill now, the rich or the middle class.

The war in Iraq was started during the 6 years of TOTAL control. The Republican Party started it over oil because American oil corporations couldn't raise the price of oil in the United States if the Arabs were selling it cheaper on the world market. Kuwait, a conquered country that we liberated, returned the favor by doubling the price of oil to us and the world market. Iraq did the same while we poured 10 billion dollars a month of borrowed money into them and their oil industry. Billions of dollars also went to Blackwater, Titan, and other US companies picked by Bush and his party.

The difference between republican supporters and myself is, I listened to their republican party, but I also watched it afterwards. While the Republican Party pounded their chests about being patriotic, I found their talk and their actions to be two different things. I found that during the 8 years of control the Republican Party showed it's true colors and they weren't red, white, and blue. Now two other leaders of the Republican Party are telling us what they will do. The main one has already been doing it to us for the last 8 years. I may have believed him if I hadn't watched his actions for that 8 years.

From now on I will believe what I see, Not what I hear. Middle class Americans don't own Corporate TV and news networks that spin the Republican Party propaganda and have their own agenda. I could have been a republican except for one thing. I didn't just listen to their words; I watched their actions.

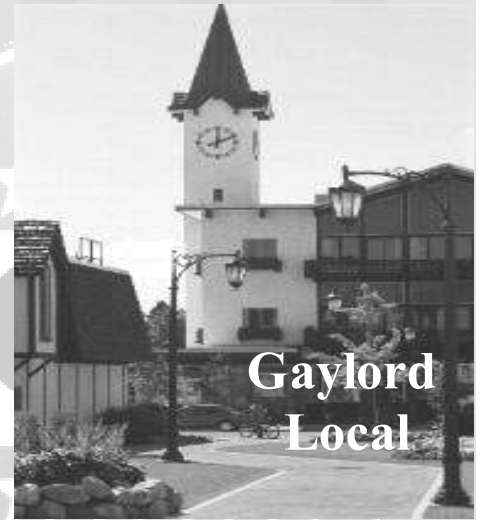
Leo

Fall is upon us. Summer has flown by and I have so many things to share with all of you. The National Constitution Convention was held in Las Vegas in August. Our delegates made some changes to the National Constitution, visited with other International Postal labor unions, and made recommendations to the National Executive Board about negotiating the next contract. We celebrated our latest COLA and relished in the fact that we still get them. It is an amazing benefit. Many others have given up their COLA, not our leaders. They recognize its importance to our members. We also voted to endorse Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States of America. He spoke to our delegation about the issues and fight before us and the need for change. It was an inspirational speech that rallied the delegates.

John and I attended Secretary-Treasurer's training in Puerto Rico last week. It was informational training to say the least. This is the first national Secretary - Treasurer's training conference either of us have attended. The classes offered were an electronic recording class, leadership, LM-3, elections, travel, payroll, budgeting and renting vs.

owning. It was informative training. Terry Stapleton was there and conducted an open session that was interesting. He discussed the impact of some of the motions passed at the National Convention. Most of them involved spending money, and finding that money in the budget will be difficult but possible. He spoke about the upcoming election and the importance of APWU members to participate and vote. So get out the VOTE!!

The training reinforced many of the practices we have already instituted, but there were also many new topics discussed. The Department of Labor is always updating their rules for Labor Organizations. Unfortunately that makes more work for local officers. The duties of Treasurer have changed significantly since the Bush



Gaylord Local

administration took over the DOL. There are no more simple transactions for the treasurer.

Locally they have postponed the removal of the OCR and BCS from September until October. We are supposed to get two DBCS machines to replace them. This will allow us to DPS more offices, but we lose out ISS and OSS back ups. John will continue to talk with Congressman Stupak and management about getting us an AFCS. If there are excess DBCS machines in our district because of declining mail volumes, there must be at least one AFCS that can be transferred to our facility. We just need to find

it.

Management has approached us on the possibility of changing our office to 10 hour shifts. Before you get too excited, let me assure you that it is just a proposal at this time. Many things need to be sorted out before it can even become a possibility. There is a committee formed that will look into 4/10 hour days for our employees. Nothing will be finalized without your input. If you have concerns or ideas to share please contact John.

Have a great fall and I look forward to talking with all of you in the near future.

In Solidarity,

Amy K. Owen

Gaylord, Secretary Treasurer



Amy with Natl Sec-Treas Terry Stapleton

MPWU OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD

President, Gary VanHoogstraten
H: (989) 894-2656; e-Mail: President@mpwu.com

Executive Secretary, Harold Juhl
W: (517) 337-8753; H: (517) 651-7115; FAX: (517) 332-4391; e-Mail: ExecSecretary@mpwu.com

Secretary-Treasurer, Darren Joyce
W: (810) 257-1530; U: (810) 239-0931; FAX: (810) 239-6879; e-Mail: Treasurer@mpwu.com

Director of Education & Research, Michael McCain
U: (313) 532-9305; H: (586) 445-8025
e-Mail: Education@mpwu.com

Editor, Michael Long
U: (616) 776-1489; C: (616) 302-1409; F: (616) 776-1536; e-Mail: Editor@mpwu.com

Legislative Dir., John Marcotte
U: (989) 619-1741; H: (989) 705-1470
e-Mail: Legislative@mpwu.com

HR/Injury Comp Dir., Jennifer Amos
W&U: (616) 776-1489; F: (616) 776-1536
e-Mail: injurycomp@mpwu.com

Clerk Craft Director, Richard Blake
H: (734) 433-5461; U: (313) 532-9305; W: (734) 665-1107; e-Mail: ClerkCraftDir@mpwu.com

Maintenance Craft Director, Larry Miller
U: (248) 543-3262; e-Mail: Maintenance@mpwu.com

Motor Vehicle Service Craft Dir., Joe Wrobel
U: (248) 543-3262; W: (248) 546-7146;
e-Mail: MVSDirector1@mpwu.com

Veterans Director, John Smeekens
W: (248) 546-7146; U: (248) 543-3262
e-Mail: Veterans@mpwu.com

Area 1 Director, Larry Moyer
W: (248) 619-1590; H: (810) 678-3479; C: (810) 338-2659; e-Mail: Area1Director@mpwu.com

Area 2 Director, Keith Fletcher
W: (313) 226-8393; U: (313) 532-9305; F: (734) 483-9086; e-Mail: Area2Director@mpwu.com

Area 3 Director, Currently Vacant
(Contact Area 2 Dir for Assistance)

Area 4 Director, Laura Bullock
W: (810) 257-1567; U: (810) 239-0931; H: (810) 606-0465; e-Mail: Area4Director@mpwu.com

Area 5 Director, Joanna Atkinson
W: (989) 771-5718; H: (989) 865-7924;
e-Mail: Area5Director@mpwu.com

Area 6 Director, Mary Stephenson
W: (517) 337-8753; C: (517) 612-3563; H: (517) 639-4873; e-Mail: Area6Director@mpwu.com

Area 7 Director, Thomas Lothamer
W: (517) 278-2632; C: (517) 677-6198; H: (517) 639-4873; e-Mail: Area7Director@mpwu.com

Area 8 Director, Russ Nicoson
H: (517) 569-3911; W: (517) 768-0726;
e-Mail: Area8Director@mpwu.com

Area 9 Director, Amy Puhalski
W: (616) 776-1489; C: (616) 822-3678;
e-Mail: Area9Director@mpwu.com

Area 10 Director, Ron Krumrie
W: (231) 946-5217; U: (231) 935-4140; H: (231) 946-7796 e-Mail: Area10Director@mpwu.com

Area 11 Director, Mike Wekwert
W: (989) 354-2520; H: (989) 356-2302;
e-Mail: Area11Director@mpwu.com

Area 12 Director, Dennis Barber
U: (906) 774-6303; H: (906) 282-0977; F: (906) 774-7353; e-Mail: Area12Director@mpwu.com

P.O.W.E.R. Rep, Karen Hodges
H: (616) 453-7091; W: (616) 776-1542; U: (616) 776-1489 e-Mail: PowerRep@mpwu.com

State Retiree Chapter President, Al LaBrecque
H: (989) 736-8173; e-Mail: RetireePres@mpwu.com

MPWU Auxiliary President, Kelly Wilniski
H: (906) 779-1348; C: (906) 282-2897
e-Mail: AuxiliaryPres@mpwu.com

MPWU Historian, Debbie Brand
H: (269) 729-9600; W: (269) 965-3286
e-Mail: Historian@mpwu.com

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

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. 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.

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

Check Us Out on the Web @ **MPWU.com**



Upcoming Events to Plan For:

January 2009—Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting

April 23 - 26 - MI-AFL-CIO Labor Press Educational Convention

June 12 - 14, 2009—MPWU Educational Convention, Bay City, MI

August 6 - 8, 2009 - National Postal Press Convention, Las Vegas, NV

April/May 2010 - MPWU Constitutional Convention, Lansing, MI



Help Us Give U.S. Veterans a Hand Up During V.A. Stand Down

By: Susan M. Carney, APWU Human Relations Director

Each year more than 1 million of our nation's veterans are homeless. This is hardly the thank-you they deserve and hardly the thank-you they have earned. So, this January, the APWU plans to give a hand up to homeless and underserved veterans during the Veterans' Administration's annual Winterhaven Stand Down. If our efforts are to succeed we need the collective support of our members, our local and state organizations, and the Auxiliary.

The event will offer veterans in need a variety of social services, such as legal and medical aid, employment counseling and housing assistance. Hot meals, haircuts, showers, warm clothing and other necessities will also be available. The APWU will have its own station at the Stand Down, where we plan to distribute donated backpacks filled with items to help these veterans get through their long days and cold winter nights. We will also be providing them with information regarding USPS employment opportunities for veterans.

To ensure that all recipients receive similar items, we are requesting that donors adhere to the APWU guidelines (which are available on the website). We truly hope everyone will participate in this very worthy cause: We owe our veterans a lifetime of gratitude.

We are asking that all APWU organizations donate at least one filled backpack, and that our larger organizations donate at least one backpack for every 300 members. To minimize costs, members who are interested

in participating are encouraged to band together and pool their funds to purchase the requested items.

Backpacks should be new or in like-new condition, weather durable, have two shoulder straps, be appropriate for adult use, and be unisex in style and color. The contents stuffed in the backpack must be new. All edible, medicinal, and toiletry items must be in manufacturer-sealed containers. Do not send anything in breakable containers; or items that are perishable or require refrigeration or heating (beyond the addition of hot water); items that can melt (such as chocolate); or items that can be crushed or mashed.

Backpacks containing used, opened, or "don't send" items will not be forwarded. When making selections, please purchase travel to mid-size items to ensure all products fit easily into the backpack.

Mail the donations to: APWU Human Relations Department, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005. Donations must be received no later than Jan. 7, 2009.

APWU organizations are encouraged to support our troops and veterans throughout the year. To learn more, visit the "Support Our Troops" link in the Human Relations Department pages at www.apwu.org.

Business, labor and civil society organizations have skills and resources that are vital in helping to build a more robust global community.

- Kofi Anan

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE MICHIGAN MESSENGER

President's Report – Gary VanHoogstraten.....	Page 1
Long and Short of It – Michael Long.....	Page 2
Veterans' Report - John Smeekens.....	Page 3
Human Relations Report - Jennifer Amos.....	Page 4
Legislative Report - John Marcotte.....	Page 5
Wheels & Wrenches - Joe Wrobel.....	Page 6
Area 5 Report - Joanna Atkinson.....	Page 7
Retiree Involvement - Al LaBrecque.....	Page 7
I Could Have Been a Republican - Leo Persails.....	Page 9
Gaylord Local Page - Amy Owens (Sec-Treas).....	Page 10
Officers and Executive Board Members.....	Page 11
Upcoming Events.....	Page 11
Help us give Veterans a Hand Up - Sue Carney.....	Page 12

**Return to APWU/MPWU
c/o Michael Long, Editor
P.O. Box 280
Sheridan, MI 48884-0280
Address Service Requested**

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Grand Rapids, MI