

Michigan MESSENGER

APWA
APWU

Volume 41, Number 158
January-February, 2012

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

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President's Report



by John
Marcotte,
President

What Is Network Consolidation

I hope all of you had a safe and joyous holiday season. It was a welcome reprieve from the constant mental anguish of workplace unrest and uncertainty. Thank you to all the local presidents who attended the Michigan presidents meeting in January. I believe this kind of communication and coordination is essential in the battle to defend the membership and the postal service as we know it.

NETWORK CONSOLIDATION - THE BIG LIE

I want all of our members to be clear what network consolidation truly is and what I believe will be its impact if adopted. The USPS's plan is to reduce the number of processing facilities by over half the current number. The only way to accomplish this is to slow down the mail. Once mail is no longer required to be processed and delivered the next day as it is now, delivery standards will effectively cease to exist. In the few remaining processing centers the mail will be processed when it is convenient for management. Convenient for management will be when it requires no overtime, late trucks, PTF or PSE hours. It will label these as avoidable costs. In the hundreds of idled facilities workers will get paid to sit in a room and do nothing as there are no jobs for these workers to transfer into.

Network consolidation will replace the current overnight with a 2-3 day delivery standard the USPS has told the American people. Postal management will issue instructions for the mail to sit and not be processed if it prevents using any "avoidable costs". The proposed 2-3 day will almost immediately become a whenever it gets there standard. To further reduce costs

management will continue to remove jobs from the remaining processing facilities via Article 12 using BPI, or projected mail volume. The loss of more workers will slow the mail down even more. USPS management will petition Congress to break its union contracts in order to lay off idle employees or simply attempt to circumvent current laws and use bankruptcy as a means to nullify union contracts.

This slowing down of the mail will cause a massive shift in the advertising and purchasing habits of the American public and dire consequences for the postal service. For many companies the USPS will no longer be seen as a viable option for advertising purposes in an ever fast paced economy. The extremely profitable first class mail volume will evaporate to almost nothing instantly as the value of this service will have been lowered to the point of insignificant.

The exploding priority mail 2-3 day delivery segment will no longer be self sustaining at its current prices. The cost of delivery that was shared with bulk and first class mail now will have to be made up almost entirely by priority mail as the other volumes disintegrate. This will eliminate a priority mail price advantage over FED EX and Brown. With the entire mail processing network slowed down the ability to deliver priority mail in 2-3



Jesus and John doing radio show on Network Consolidation.

days will be compromised severely and therefore delayed. The delivery of overnight mail will be impossible. Priority volume will be lost to competition as the advantages of speed and price are eliminated and overnight mail will cease to exist.

Without the volume to support daily delivery the USPS will lobby Congress to only deliver 3 days a week. This will cause a massive slow down of the mails and another "network consolidation" will be performed reducing the number of mail processing facilities in half again. The only mails the postal service will be left processing will be for extremely rural America that has no time requirement to be delivered. For those of you who think this is extreme you need to look at the Canadian post office. It tried to consolidate its way to success and is a shell of its former self.

The USPS is a hairs breath away from entering a death spiral that is unrecoverable. The same USPS

managers who thought the American economy would never have a downturn, grossly failed to predict mail volume, entered into contracts with their competition costing billions in revenue, refused to downsize middle management during the internet revolution, testified to Congress it could prepay its employees healthcare and agreed to a union contract then three months later was asking to break it now is to be trusted it knows what it is doing when it comes to running the post office? It would be laughable if not for some in Congress and the media are drinking the Kool-Aid. Privatization will lead to higher costs to the American people, lower standard of living for the workers and a loss of tax revenue and jobs in virtually every town and city in the United States. We either educate our communities and representatives or our jobs, retirement and healthcare will be gone. Its that simple.



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by Paul Felton,
Legislative Director

I was throwing mail in a letter hand case recently when the coworker in the next case asked why the APWU wasn’t using our vast “treasure chest” to buy full page newspaper ads all over the country explaining what’s really behind the USPS financial deficit. There are a number of things I could have said in response. This coworker has a considerable misunderstanding about the treasury of national APWU. She also never noticed the dues assessment that is being used for TV ads, and she is unaware of the ads themselves. I told her about the commercials and we got into a discussion of the relative impact of newspaper ads versus TV commercials. In either case, there is a limit to APWU’s ability to finance an advertising campaign that reaches everybody.

This brings me to the theme of this article. Our greatest resource, if we can tap into it, is the activism of rank-and-file members. We have done a reasonably good job encouraging members to contact their Congressional reps and last September rallying at Congressional offices all over the country. I suggest we need to add another level to our activism. We need to reach out to people in our communities in a variety of ways.

Those of our members who are veterans and belong to organizations such as VFW, America Legion, etc can seek support from those organizations. Not only will the proposed closing of 3600 Post Offices and up to 300 plants hurt current employees who are veterans, but the job opportunities for soldiers coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan will dry up if management has its way.

Those members who enjoy social networking should aggressively initiate discussion in those venues. Go ahead and tweet or Facebook (I know, “Facebook” isn’t a verb) and open up the eyes of

Legislative Report

Our Greatest Resource

people who haven’t heard the truth from the corporate-controlled media.

See if we can get speaking engagements at schools, whether parent-teacher organizations, social studies teachers in a High School class, sympathetic professors, etc

See if we can address other (non-postal) union meetings or union retiree organizations.

Hook up with the “Occupy” movement wherever feasible.

Some of these activities can be handled by rank-and-file members, some by members with assistance from union leadership. In some cases the members may make the initial contact and be accompanied by an Officer at the meeting.

I am convinced there are more people who care and will support us once they know the truth. Let me tell you a story I read from a group in Oregon.

Last December people “occupied” Post Offices in 17 rural communities that were slated to close. They brought Christmas cards, cookies and gifts of appreciation for postal workers, along with petitions to change the laws that caused the postal deficit. In the town of Deadwood, a retired teacher named Leslie Benscoter was quoted as saying, “Deadwood won’t exist in ten years without a post office. That’s why I occupy 97430.”

I have read stories of successful mobilizations involving communities where small offices or large plants are slated to close. There has been a significant backlash to management’s public announcement of massive closings and degrading the service standards. It’s time for our greatest resource – the members – to reach out to our greatest potential allies – the 99 percent of the population that isn’t as wealthy and powerful as the top one percent – and create a momentum that will force both Democrats and Republicans to fix the mess that Congress created – without massive cutbacks, layoffs, or attacks on our wages and benefits.

DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

Many of our members are cynical about all politicians, regardless of party. That cynicism is justified. But we can’t just throw up our hands and say we’re not going to bother with any of them. We have to understand the dynamics behind the current Congressional debates, the pressure points, the inconsistencies, and the possibilities of getting a better outcome from a Congress that is far too much under the influence of corporate money.

Hopefully, most of our members understand that the attack on postal workers is being led by Republicans like Darrell Issa of California. It has been well publicized that he held hearings about the APWU contract which he criticized as “too generous,” he is demanding massive downsizing of the Postal Service, he believes there should be layoffs, etc. The Republican-majority House also passed legislation which would adversely affect our retirement systems.

Members may also be aware that management put a moratorium on plant and post office closings for five months. Members may not be aware that this move was spurred by a letter from 22 Senators – all Democrats (including an Independent who caucuses with the Democrats) – requesting such a moratorium.

This doesn’t mean the Democrats are completely reliable allies. In early December President Obama nominated Tony Hammond to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Hammond is a Republican whose appointment sparked the following comment on the www.savethepostoffice.com web site: “That’s probably not good news for communities trying to save their post office or processing plant, and its not good news for postal workers either.” President Obama has indicated a willingness to go to 5-day delivery as well. However, he would certainly veto the Republican bill (HR-2309) that demands layoffs, radical downsizing and other attacks on postal workers.

It may be a bit of an oversimplification, but here’s how I look at it. If left to their own devices, the Republicans would dismantle the postal network and degrade service by laying off current workers and attacking our wages, benefits and retirement. The Democrats would allow the Postal Service to be radically downsized if it can be done through monetary incentives and Early Retirement offers and without the sharp attack on current workers. That’s better than what the Republicans want, but it’s not good enough,

We need to build a grass roots movement against the downsizing and service cutbacks, period. We have already taken some strides in that direction. The next step is to mobilize our greatest resource – the membership.

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	Stevensville
Battle Creek	480-481	Pontiac	Traverse City
Central MI	498-499	Roger City	Troy Local
Cheboygan	Gaylord	486-487	Western MI
Detroit District	Jackson	Sault Ste Marie	
Farmington	Ludington	Southwest MI	

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.





by Michael A.
Long,
Editor

Brothers and Sisters,

Whew . . . busy two months. However, with this edition of the *Michigan Messenger*, everyone that should be getting a copy of *the Messenger* is now getting it. I have just completed the annual update of the state mailing list. Surprised is an understatement as to the amount of changes that occurred. While a lot of them were deletions, there seemed to be a lot of additions as well. I can only surmise that these are the new PSEs that have joined our union ranks. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome them. Now

that you are part of your local union, I would implore to you to become involved. Become involved with your local, the state organization, and if you so desire, at the National level as well. I know I have asked a couple in my local to step up to become stewards to focus on PSE issues.

Just a quick moment to ensure that you notice a few items in this edition of the newsletter. Please note that all this information is on the MPWU.com website and is updated frequently there. Go and check it out there!

- The Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting is scheduled for March 3rd in Lansing, Michigan. While all the details are still be worked out, please

make plans to attend. This will be a one-day only session.

- Michigan Labor Press Spring Conference will take place April 26 – 29, 2012 at Shanty Creek in Bellaire, Michigan. All those responsible for communicating with the membership should make plans to attend. This year's focus will deal with getting the message out to the membership on a "shoestring budget." Check out the website at MILaborPress.org for more information or friend us on Facebook.

- The Michigan Postal Workers Union Convention will take place on May 31 – June 2, 2012 in Traverse City, Michigan. In this edition of *the*

Messenger you will notice the Convention calls for both the conventions – MPWU and Retiree Conventions.

- The APWU National Convention will take place August 20 – 24, 2012 in Los Angeles, California; with respective Craft Conference taking place August 18 – 19; and Pre-Convention workshops on August 17th. Check out the APWU website for more information.

In closing, I wish each of you the best of this new year. If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to let me know. The deadline for the next edition of *the Michigan Messenger* is March 15, 2012.

2012 Michigan Postal Workers Union 23rd Biennial Constitutional, Retiree, And Auxiliary Convention

May 31, June 1 – 2, 2012

Park Place Hotel • Traverse City, Michigan

CONVENTION CALL

The 23rd Biennial Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union will convene on May 31, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the Park Place Hotel in Traverse City, Michigan and will adjourn at the conclusion of business on June 2, 2012.

Costs: Hotel: **Wednesday - May 30** - \$77.00; **Thursday and Friday - May 31 and June 1** (NOTE: This price is for a combination of both days. Not individual days) - \$201.34 (Single) / \$124.87 p/p (Double Occupancy) (This rate is a lump sum for both days and includes Lunch on Thursday & Friday and Breakfast on Friday). **Saturday - June 2** - \$77.00

Registration: \$75.00 per delegate
Resolutions need to be submitted to and received by Executive Secretary Harold Juhl by April 15, 2012. Resolutions need to be signed by both the President and Secretary of the local submitting (hard copy) along with a copy on digital media (e.g. Flash Drive or e-mail). A template for resolutions is available on the website.

A list of all delegates attending the convention need to be submitted by April 15, 2012.

Article 7 of the MPWU Constitution states: "Time of the Convention and Election of Officers"

Section 1: The Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, shall convene the same year as the Na-

tional Convention of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, on any Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in April or May. In any week except that which precedes Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mothers Day, or Memorial Day.

Section 2: It shall be the sole responsibility of the State Union to plan and expedite the proceedings of the Convention, including suitable and ample accommodations for delegates. It shall further be the responsibility of the State President to appoint two (2) members of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, and the President of the State Convention Committee to work with any Local who represents the Convention location as voted under Article 7, Section 5. The financial responsibility of the State Convention shall be solely that of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.

Section 3: The Convention shall convene at 9:30 a.m. on the first day and recess at 11:30 a.m., immediately after the committee assignments and reconvene at 3:00 p.m. The Constitution Committee shall meet the day prior to the first day of the MPWU Constitution Convention. This time is to be utilized for official use by the committees. The Convention shall remain in session until completed.

Section 4: Nominations for, all candidates for Executive Board positions shall be the last order of busi-

ness, Friday of the Convention. A member, in good standing not at the Convention, can provide a written nomination for an Executive Board position, which will serve as their acceptance. All written nominations must be received by the MPWU Executive Secretary via US Mail, faxed, or hand delivered, by the close of nominations for the elective office of the MPWU Convention.

No candidate shall be allowed to run for more than one (1) office. Any nominee must accept or decline a nomination for office, prior to the closing of nominations. Convention Delegates as well as the Convention City shall be the first order of business on Saturday. 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. shall be reserved exclusively, for the purpose of caucuses.

Section 5: The election of Officers will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday of the Convention. A President, Secretary Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Director of Education, Human Relations/Compensation Director, Legislative Director, Editor, (3) Craft Directors, Area directors, Convention Delegates, plus Convention City, will be elected at this time, by secret ballot.

Section 6: [A] The three (3) Craft Directors shall be elected by secret ballot in accordance with Section 5 above, but Craft Directors shall be elected from delegates from their Craft only. [B] Area Directors shall be elected by secret ballot from del-

egates, present from their Area only. If a Craft or Area Director is not represented by at least one delegate to the Convention, or if there are no candidates from a specific Craft or Area, for the position of Craft or area Director, then the President shall appoint a member of that Craft or Area to that position, with the advise and consent of a majority of the Executive Board. [C] If after three (3) ballots have been cast, a tie exists, a toss of a coin will break the tie.

Section 7: All terms of office shall be from the date of the certification by Election Committee, until the conclusions of the elections, at the next scheduled MPWU State Convention.

Section 8: Any retired member, who is paying full dues to their Local Union, may hold office in this Union. Any retired member who retires from State Office, can at the discretion of the Present, be used in an advisory capacity.

In addition, Article 9 (Representation), Section 1, states: Each Local Union or Area local affiliated with the MPWU shall be entitled to representation in the State Convention on the following basis: All locals shall receive one delegate for each twenty (20) members or any portion thereof. To be computed on the basis of the previous twenty-four (24) month's average paid membership. In addition, no Local may pay more than three (3) months back dues at one time, prior to the State Convention.



by John
Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Veteran's Report

Facts And Information

CONGRESS AND VETERANS'

Legislation was passed shortly after Veterans Day to help our Veterans in this struggling economy. Tax Credits, Expanded Training, Mandatory Transition Assistance Program (TAP), Benefits Extensions for Disabled Veterans, and a special program for post 9/11 Veterans. It was all signed into law on November 21, 2011. Don't forget that your County Veterans Representatives and numerous VSO's from Veterans Organizations have all this information available for you, for the asking.

POST-9/11 MILITARY DISABILITY RATINGS COULD INCREASE

Veterans discharged between Sept. 11, 2001, and Dec. 31, 2009, with disability ratings of 20% or lower, are being urged to apply for a review of their military medical disability rating. In January, the VA and Defense Department's Physical Disability Board of Review, or PDBR, hope to begin sending letters to thousands of Post-9/11 veterans to urge them to apply for the review. Congress created the PDBR to address inconsistent disability ratings between the four services, and to determine if some veterans are eligible for increased ratings. Currently, **only 3,000 out of 77,000 eligible veterans have applied for the review**, with half

receiving upgrades to 30% or more, which would make them eligible for a military medical retirement, retiree pay, access to military healthcare and other benefits. The hard part, according to officials, is finding these new veterans, which is where **YOU** can help. If you know a Post-9/11 veteran who was separated with a low disability rating, tell him or her to visit the "Physical Disability Board of Review" webpage. They'll thank you for it later.

GOOGLE FOR VETERANS

Actor Gary Sinise, and CBS affiliates nationwide have joined Google in a 30-second public service announcement to launch Google for Veterans, which will enable military personnel, veterans and families to better connect, share and document their stories and lessons learned from deploying and redeploying to transitioning and job seeking. There is also a resume builder and a free video chat feature. The initiative is the result of military veterans and family members who work for Google, who understand the challenges of serving, coming home and transitioning to civilian life

RULES EASE FOR UNDIAGNOSED GULF WAR ILLNESSES

Veterans of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses now have an additional five years to qualify for VA benefits. A recent change in VA regulations affects veterans of the

conflict in Southwest Asia. Many have attributed a range of undiagnosed or poorly understood medical problems to their military services, with chemical weapons, environmental hazards and vaccinations among the possible causes. At issue is the eligibility to claim VA disability compensation based upon those undiagnosed illnesses, and the ability of survivors to qualify for VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Under long-standing VA rules, any undiagnosed illnesses used to establish eligibility for VA benefits must have become apparent by Dec. 31, 2011. The new change pushes the date back to Dec. 31, 2016.

SAD BUT TRUE

Michigan has the 11th highest number of Veterans among 53 U.S. States and territories, but it ranks **dead last** in per capita federal Veterans benefits. Michigan Veterans receive approximately \$1,500.00 less each month than the national average. And now, Michigan's more than 700,000 Veterans will soon be able to learn about and apply for all the benefits they're entitled to by visiting one-stop local offices, being launched by the Michigan Department of Human Services. The first Veterans Services Department offering one-stop access to all Veterans services is opening in Macomb County. The pilot site is a joint effort between DHS and the Macomb County Veterans Services Department. It is located

at 21885 Dunham Road in Clinton Township(behind the Macomb County Jail), in an office that shares a lobby with the Mount Clemens DHS office. DHS staff members received training in Veterans programs so they can provide the most effective and efficient service as possible, to our Veterans. Staff from both agencies will be cross trained to identify benefits available from both the state and federal government. **During the upcoming year, similar combined offices will be opened in counties across the State of Michigan, as DHS works with federal, state and local officials to build collaborative services for Veterans.** One of the most important venues of this program is to reach out to our over **45,000 Female Veterans**, since so many of them have not applied for benefits. Federal Veterans benefits for them include mammograms, pap smears, maternity care, hormone replacement therapy, and a wide range of mental health assistance, including treatment for sexual trauma and post traumatic stress disorder. It is expected that sometime early in 2012, that a comprehensive plan will be put forth to streamline the delivery of these services so that our Veterans will know exactly what is available for them, and where to go to get them.

BURN PIT LEGISLATION

Recently, a media event unveiled the Open Burn Pit Registry Act of 2011, a bill that would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a registry for individuals who may have been exposed to a burn pit in Iraq or Afghanistan. Many service organizations have fought to raise awareness of the health problems associated with exposure in these areas where Burn Pits were located. This registry will help identify who may be entitled to healthcare and benefits from toxic inhalation in the future.

THUNDERBIRDS

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds announced that on June 30 & July 1, in **Battle Creek, Michigan**, they will be performing their aerial feats. The team, officially known as the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, will also do a flyover for the 54th running of NASCAR's Daytona 500 on Feb. 26. This is their only scheduled Michigan appearance.

VETERANS HOUSING

The Department of Veterans Affairs has entered agreements to provide more than 3,000 units of permanent and transitional housing for Veterans at 25 VA medical center campuses

continued on page 6



by Gary
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MPWU
Advisor

MPWU Advisor

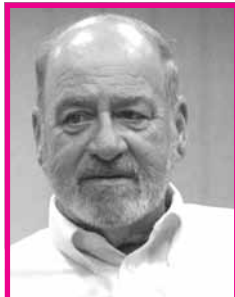
Grading Your Governor

said it was about jobs and the kids. Jobs. Even though the unemployment numbers have declined, the new tax system, which comes at a great cost to retirees born before 1945, deserves scrutiny. How about our roads and assorted infrastructure. It's difficult to lure companies when our roads look like they endure seismic events every night. He has dome little more than note the burgeoning tab Michigan is running up. The state legislators continue to refuse to move a bill that would have initiated a new bridge between Detroit and Canada. Don't you think this would have brought more jobs to Michigan? Snyder did protect Medicaid in his first budget but I still think something needs to be done for all those that collect funding from the State. An example is limits on cash welfare and drug testing for those on food stamps and receiving payments. Snyder has made little effort to fend off the worst excesses of the GOP hard right, signing the bill that destroys any hope of benefits for domestic partners of public employees.

His sharpest criticism of pending legislation is that it comes in the form of "that is not on my agenda". He told legislation through several hard tasks, excluding the difficult budget and reasons of the law for fading government and school districts. As noted above, the governor has done little to rein in his fellow Republicans. His reimagining of how the State should work is generally sound. But leadership requires followers. 2012 will be Snyder's proving ground. The governor and some media outlets are touting that the state is expected to have a budget surplus soon. That should have been expected based on the governor's policies. Businesses were given tax breaks and citizens are paying for it. Look at the status of the average citizen in Michigan. They are paying more taxes, welfare recipients are cut off, and the only jobs Snyder has created are emergency managers. As we all know and I have said it above, this is election year for many and we must speak our peace to each and every one of them.

GRADING YOUR GOVERNOR

It has been just a little over a year and maybe it is now time to rate your governor. In his inauguration speech he



by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

"When the Post Office is closed, the flag comes down. When the human side of government closes its doors, we're all in trouble." Jennings Randolph, U.S. Senator 1958-85.

STAY OF EXECUTION – The USPS announced a five (5)-month moratorium on post office and plant closures until May 15th in response to a request from 22 U.S. Senators is indication that noise generated from the field has had a positive effect. Unfortunately, it comes too late for mail processing plants like Flint. It's also duly noted that all 22 Senators are Democrats, but our two Dem Senators, Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, were not among them. That's troubling in as much as Stabenow is running for re-election, and Levin sits on the Homeland Security & Government Affairs Committee dealing with USPS issues. Apparently we've got more work to do. In fairness, a letter from Levin expressed support for our concerns on closures.

An excellent report on the expectations of the moratorium is sobering, predicting that mass closures will occur after the May 15th date. The report states thousands of communities will have second public meetings during late winter and late spring. The moratorium is ostensibly to give Congress time to enact legislation to prevent cuts in service, but the reality is that it likewise provides the USPS destruction squads time to solidify justifications for closures.

Once determinations by USPS to close a plant or rural P.O. is completed, appeals to the Postal Regulatory Commission can be made. It's recommended that communities (that's all of US) file an appeal to the PRC even though the success rate of remanding closures by the PRC are few and far between. The report cites of 138 appeals currently before the PRC will likely yield about 15 remanded decisions and 123 P.O.'s will close as soon as the moratorium is lifted on top of some 100 that didn't file appeals. The remand rate has been about 1 in 10 appealed. The PRC consists of 3 Republicans and 2 Democrats. The Dems consistently favor remands while the GOP members are content to affirm USPS closure decisions. So, ask yourself; Which side are you on?! And, remember on election day! Despite the grim prospects, if we really care we can't give up or give in!

SAGINAW 486-487 LOCAL RETIREE CHAPTER – Brother Gary VanHoogstraten has assumed presidency of the 486-487 Area Local Retiree Chapter, succeeding Brother Jerry Clairmont who organized

the Chapter and so faithfully served the retiree membership for 12 years. Jerry also served the MPWU State Retiree Chapter as Sec.-Treas. for 10 years. It should be noted that along with Brother Clairmont, Brother Charlie Kolhoff was Jerry's right hand man and continues on the reorganized Saginaw Chapter's board and as a Michigan State Retiree Chapter Trustee. The some 97 retiree members of the Chapter owe Brothers Clairmont and Kolhoff their deep gratitude for their loyal service to the 486-487 Area Local and Chapter membership. I am personally equally grateful for their generous service and friendship!

Now, it's time for the retiree members of the Saginaw 486-487 Local Chapter to step up and get behind Brother Gary Van's leadership! You are indeed fortunate to have the expertise and leadership of the immediate past president of the Michigan Postal Workers Union as your Chapter president, and the success of your Local Chapter depends on your support and participation. After all, it's for you! Good Luck, Gary, and God Bless for assuming leadership!

LEAP YEAR 2012 – John L. Lewis admonished; "Reward your friends and defeat your enemies!" Every postal worker and retiree, regardless of your past political preference, had better get smart and determine who's who on our bread and butter best interests. There's no doubt in my mind with all the apparent facts before us. How any member with an ounce of common sense can either vote for those in Congress bent on destroying the Postal Service and advocating attacking retiree benefits, or fail to register and vote defies comprehension! This Leap Year will bring significant events to our State MPWU and Retiree Chapter. The State Union and Chapter Conventions, May 31-June 2 in Traverse City and the APWU National Convention pre-convention Retirees Dept Conference in L.A. The Michigan State Retiree Chapter Convention Call will appear in this and the next issue of the "Messenger". The State Chapter convention will feature election of officers and resolutions on the paramount issues to be presented at the APWU National Convention.

If you are a member of the APWU Retirees Dept. residing in Michigan, you are eligible to run for a State Chapter office. You do not have to belong to a Local Chapter to run. If you are one of the 1,300 members in Michigan, you're eligible. You will find serving a deeply rewarding experience. There is a lot of talent in our ranks, past officers, stewards and activists just lying fallow. You are needed, and you are invited!

Retiree Involvement

Stay Of Execution

Please give it serious consideration. Frankly, we are an aging group, many of us having held office for the 12 years the State Chapter has been organized. In my own case, I'd gladly hand off the baton for the office of President and assist my successor in every way. Consider that an invitation as well!

I've thoroughly enjoyed serving and know I would miss being involved. At the same time I know that time will inevitably come and I'd much prefer to step down while I'm able to assist in transition. 53 years of Union and Retiree Involvement has been a great journey and giving it up won't be easy. Been there and done that. Hanging up my whistle and cleats as a high school football coach after 28 years was one of the toughest decisions I've had to make and I still miss the competition and working with the kids. But, when it comes to the reality that you're unable to do the whole job, it's time to go. Travel has become a chore to conferences and conventions out-of-state, taking a toll on this old carcass that I'm increasingly less willing to undertake. Flights, airports and the extensive walk-

ing required at huge event sites make the prospects of attending something to be dreaded. Besides, it's become increasingly difficult to meet these column deadlines. So there, I've said it! Now, who will step up?

REQUIEM – It is with deep sadness to announce the untimely passing of PAT HARTSHORN-LaFORTUNE on January 9, 2012 at age 64. Pat is the former wife of the late MPWU President and NBA, Clyde Hartshorn, Jr. Pat had remarried after Clyde's passing to Robert LaFortune. Pat reportedly suffered a brain aneurism and had been in a coma 3 months before expiring. She was a dear friend to many of us and Clyde's anchor supporting his good work as Flint Local president, and many will remember as this State Union's gracious first lady through Clyde's ascension to NBA. Both now gone far too soon. Sincerest condolences to son, Brett, Pat's Family, and her many friends of our Union Family. "Eternal rest grant unto her 'O Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon her". Amen.

Be Strong!

2012 Michigan State Retiree Chapter 5th Biennial Constitutional Convention Friday, June 1, 2012

Park Place Hotel • Traverse City, Michigan

MPWU STATE RETIREE CHAPTER CONVENTION CALL

The 5th Biennial Constitutional Convention of the State Retiree Chapter, Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, will convene on Friday, June 1, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the Park Place Hotel in Traverse City, Michigan, in conjunction with the 23rd Biennial Constitutional Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. If business is not completed by adjournment on Friday, Convention will reconvene on Saturday. Time to be announced.

Registration: Thursday, May 31, 2012, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Friday, June 1, 2012, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Hotel Reservations: Wednesday - May 30 - \$77.00; Thursday and Friday - May 31 and June 1 (NOTE: This price is for a combination of both days. Not individual days) - \$201.34 (Single) / \$124.87 p/p (Double Occupancy) (This rate is a lump sum for both days and includes Lunch on Thursday & Friday and Breakfast on Friday) **Saturday - June 2 - \$77.00).** Park Place Hotel; 300 E. State Street; Traverse City, MI 49684; Phone: (231) 946-5000. Be sure to tell reservations that you are with the Michigan Postal Workers Union to receive the negotiated rate.

Registration Fee: \$75.00**State Retiree Chapter E-Board officer registration fees will be included in expenses. (No registration fee will be charged for one-day commuter retiree delegates.)

Meals: Some meals are included in the Hotel room rate. Otherwise, everyone will be on their own for meals. State Retiree Chapter E-Board officers meal expenses will be included in authorized expenses upon submission of receipts, beginning with Thursday dinner and ending with Sunday breakfast.

Delegates: Article 10, MPWU State Retiree Chapter Constitution states: "The voting strength of member Local Retiree Chapters at Convention shall be one (1) vote for every twenty (20) members, or fraction thereof. Representation shall be based upon the membership of each member Local Retiree Chapter in the year preceding the Convention. Members -At-Large

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by James Stevenson,
Area 2 Director

The collective bargaining agreement affords many rights and protections to postal employees however, there are numerous protections outside the CBA which employees fail to utilize. These rights are guaranteed to employees regardless of whether you have passed a 90 day probation and makes no distinction between PSE or Career employees.

Title VII of the Civil Rights of 1964: Commonly known in the postal service as an "EEO." Prohibits discrimination and harassment based upon sex, race, color, national origin, and religion.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA): Prohibits discrimination against employees who are "qualified individuals with a disability."

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act(PDA): Prohibits discrimination based upon pregnancy. (Many of our union sisters may not be aware of this law)

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA): Prohibits discrimination against employees 40 years and older.

Prohibited Personnel Practices Title 5 Section 2302 (Nepotism): This act covers a variety of issues but only one provision is applicable to the Postal Service and that is the prohibition against Nepotism.

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA): Prohibits the employer from retaliating against an employee for engaging in protected and or concerted activities. An individual need not have

Area 2 Director

— Know Your Rights —

picketed or filed a grievance to be considered protected activity. If management retaliates against employees complaining about working conditions and or wages that is protected activity. A single individual representing the concerns of 2 or more employees as it relates to working conditions. A single employee who complains to a government agency including but not limited to OSHA,OWCP,EEOC, and the Department of Labor. The act has additional provisions and regulations.

Fair Labor Standard Act (FLSA): Covers numerous provisions regarding wages and working conditions. If you have worked and management has refused to pay you it is a violation under the act.

RESIGNING IN LIEU OF TERMINATION

Be careful when deciding to quit rather than face termination. Management sometimes act as if they are doing you a favor by saying how they are helping you out by allowing you to "resign" before you are terminated. When it comes to subsequent employers a resignation in lieu of termination is no better for you than being fired. The new employer will ask one question of the previous employer "Is the employee eligible for rehire?" Once the Postal Service says "No" the new employer knows that you were about to be fired and you quit. Another pitfall is if you decide to take action against the employer for

wrongfully terminating you a voluntary resignation could seriously impact your ability to seek remedies later on.

Resigning could also prevent you from obtaining unemployment benefits as you are now determined to have voluntarily quit a job

Discontinued Service Retirement and Unacceptable Performance (Inefficiency. With so many changes in the Postal Service and employees being moved around in conjunction with technology some of our brothers and sisters may not be able to adapt. Some employees may not be able to perform the new job or an old job that has changed. Unacceptable performance

means the failure to fulfill the requirements of high standards of service. The employee's work may not measure up to the standards the agency expects, due to his or her actual inability to do the work after sincere effort (CSRS and FERS Handbook). Such an employee who has 20 years of service and age 50 or 25 years of service and any age may be eligible for Discontinued Service Retirement under Section 44A2.19 of the handbook. Title 5 CFR Part 432 or 752. Whenever considering any retirement options always consult a retirement specialist before making a final decision.

In Solidarity.

2012 Michigan State Retiree Chapter 5th Biennial Constitutional Convention

continued from page 5

shall be entitled to one (1) vote each. Each MPWU State Retiree Chapter officer holding an elective office shall have a voice and one (1) vote and shall be a delegate to the MPWU State Retiree Chapter Convention." (NOTE: In order to fulfill these provisions, Local Retiree Chapters are requested to bring their Local Chapter dues rebate printouts to the Convention to verify the voting strength of each Local Retiree Chapter. While it may not be necessary, we want to be correct and without question).

NOMINATION & ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Article 6. "Elections". "All regular elections shall be held in conjunction with the election of officers of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO. Officers shall be elected by secret ballot vote. Notice of election shall be advertised in the Michigan Messenger at least thirty (30) days preceding the election. Nominations and elections procedures shall be in accordance with the MPWU Constitution. Appeals to the conduct of elections shall be in accordance with the elections appeals procedures of the MPWU Constitution."

ARTICLE 5. OFFICERS.

Section 1. "The elected officers of this State Chapter shall be: President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and up to three (3) Trustees."

Section 2. "To be eligible for office, a member must be in good standing for three (3) months immediately preceding the election, as certified by the Secretary-Treasurer."

Section 3. "To be eligible to vote in an election of officers, a member must be in good standing for the three (3) months immediately preceding the election as certified by the Chapter Secretary-Treasurer."

Nominations for State Retiree Chap-

ter officers will be the last order of business prior to lunch recess on Friday, April 16th. Elections of State Retiree Chapter officers will be conducted at 3:00 p.m., Friday, June 1st. Election results will be announced prior to adjournment on Friday, June 1st.

CREDENTIALS: Credential cards will be issued to MPWU State Retiree Chapter Executive Board officers. Credential cards for Local Retiree Chapter delegates and M.A.L. delegates may be obtained from: Al LaBrecque; 3550 Wilson St.; Spruce, MI 48762, or call 989-736-8173; or e-mail: allab@sisna.com. Local Retiree Chapter credential cards are to be filled out showing both the name of the delegate and Local Retiree Chapter represented. Credentials must be typed or printed and signed by the Local Retiree Chapter President and Secretary, or Secretary-Treasurer. Green Cards should be furnished to the delegates for exchange with the Credentials Committee in Lansing when registering. Return the Blue Card at once to: MPWU Sec.-Treas., Darren Joyce; P.O. Box 1124; Flint, MI 48501, no later than March 30th!

Resolutions: Resolutions intended to be submitted to the MPWU State Convention for consideration by the MPWU State Convention delegates, must be submitted through a Local Retiree Chapter's parent APWU Local for submission to, and received by MPWU State Exec.-Sec., Harold Juhl, by April 15, 2012. Resolutions intended to be considered by the delegates to the State Retiree Chapter Convention must be submitted to the Trustees no later than 12 Noon, June 1st.

Guest Speaker: Judy Beard, National APWU Retiree Department Director

If you have any further questions, concerns, or need more information, please contact State Retiree President Al LaBrecque.

Facts And Information

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nationwide. Additionally, agreements are pending on an additional 1,000 units, which we anticipate completing in the coming weeks. Proposed opportunities include housing for homeless Veterans, senior Veterans, disabled Veterans, other at-risk Veteran populations, and their families. The agreements are part of VA's Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative. BURR is a VA strategic effort to identify and repurpose unused VA land and buildings in support of VA's goal to end Veteran homelessness. VA is using its enhanced-use lease authority

to permit third-party providers to finance, design, develop, maintain and operate housing with on-site supportive services, on a priority basis, for Veterans and their families. The co-location of these projects on VAMC campuses ensures that Veterans have ready access to care and treatment designed to help them attain long-term independence and self-sufficiency. An estimated total of 5,300 units of affordable and supportive housing will be provided to Veterans. This number includes projects already in operation or underway. **Battle Creek Michigan will get 100 permanent housing units.**

Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting

Save The Date!

Saturday, March 3 • Lansing, MI
New! One Day Only Meeting

Watch MPWU website for Hotel and Agenda
or call Mary Stephenson (Area 6 Director) at (517) 980-6125



by Thomas
Lothamer,
Area 8 Director

Associate Offices (level 20 and below) got a real boost with the best contractual language ever for those of us working in Associate Offices. So what is the Postal Services problem with the language that could not be any clearer than if it was written in one of our children's coloring books.

To begin with, the Global Settlement, concerning the work limitations of managers in these smaller offices. It says, Level 15 and 16 offices are capped at 25 maximum clerk hours that can be performed during the course of a week

and Level 18 offices are capped at 15 clerk hours and Level 20 will be zero clerk hours performed by management. Yet, managers are putting up box mail, performing distribution, working the window (this does mean while their drawer is in then they are considered working the window whether they have a customer or not), registered bags, BMEU, passports, dispatching trucks, collection mail, unit final. These are all our duties !!! Mike Morris, our National head of Industrial Relations told us at a convention, "If it is not granting leave or issuing discipline then it is our work". So let's look at it like that, watch what is being done, keep track of your hours on a calendar at home and

call us. We, your representatives around the state are staying very busy trying to get USPS management to see that what is written is what is written it is right there in Black and White and yet it is still happening, we have a lot on our plate not knowing about closings and elimination of Saturday delivery which we should be telling our communities and our families to be calling their Congressmen about (Walberg) is where I live and he hasn't supported the Postal working families.

I want to take a minute to welcome our new PSE brothers and sisters and let you know we are hear for you, give us a call. It doesn't matter if you're a PSE, PTF, or FTR give us a call about any of

these questions you may have because I know we have just as many for management. None of us can claim to know the contract word for word but when we address issues that are so clearly printed shouldn't we resolve these at the lowest level and desist from the performance of these duties.

Let us work together to enforce this language, the Union is spreading pretty thin these days too, we have all felt it in some regards, if you're a member keep in touch and if your not, maybe you will be because helping to keep us solvent by signing up will help us help you and that couldn't be any more Black and White.

Happy to represent.

Area 8 Director

— Black And White —



by Jason
Rushing,
Maintenance
Craft Director

I don't know about you, but it seems like there is a new rumor everyday at the Post Office I work at. Rumors of moving this, closing that, bringing in work, sending out work, I personally, am tired of rumors. As a management person, they are supposed to have credibility. So, when they state something to you as an employee, you should be able to believe them. Technically, it should not be put out to the employees until the APWU was notified first, either locally or nationally, depending on how many employees are effected. Sometimes the local union is notified after the fact, sometimes not at all. I just wish the rumor weed killer would be sprayed and stop all the rumors until some facts come out.

Along that same line of thinking, I think it would be prudent to prepare for change, just in case. I know I discussed a few issues ago, about how maintenance employees are in a unique situation. You may really like where you are at in maintenance, but it never hurts to be open to a change. All maintenance employees should take all the exams interested in, to see which lists you can get on. Open season comes up in March of this year, so prepare to study up and take some tests. Open season is only for maintenance employees. It is a different process than years ago. There are two parts to the written test, then you also must go through a Interview Panel. You can update every 120 days the exams you have taken in the past. So, if you have not taken the BEM or MPE exam in the past, this is your chance. Then if you do not pass, every

Maintenance Craft Report

What Is Up In The Maintenance Craft?

120 days you can update.

The reason I keep talking about updating your scores and taking tests for a new position is one word, excessing. The Post Office is going through some changes and I myself, want to keep as many options open as possible. If you

have test scores, even if you never held the position, it may keep you from being sent somewhere you don't want to go, away from your current home.

If you have questions or comments feel free to email or call me. I am always open to others opinions and

ideas. Always remember that we cannot make it alone, it is always better in numbers. So lets stick together and show management how it is done!

Thank you again for letting me serve you, the member!

In Solidarity.

Make the Call!

1-800-327-4968
TTY: 1-877-492-7341
www.EAP4YOU.com

January 2012

Achieving Work/Life Balance

Meeting the demands of an increasingly complex world means developing strategies for maintaining balance in our lives.

Is Your Life Out-of-Balance?

- ◇ You may find yourself having a hard time concentrating or feeling less creative.
- ◇ You may feel overwhelmed and experience a range of emotions including anger, sadness, guilt, fear, frustration, resentment, hurt and loneliness. You may experience trouble sleeping, social alienation, or conflict with others around you.
- ◇ Finally, you may find yourself feeling powerless, and suffer from low self-esteem or self-confidence.

What Is a Good Balance for Me?

- ◆ There is no set formula for living a balanced life.
- ◆ It's important to stand back and assess your situation before determining whether you need or want to change the balance in your life. You can start out by asking yourself these questions:
Is my life right now the way I want it to be?
If not, what is wrong with it?
Is my current situation temporary?
What can I change to make my life more fulfilling and enjoyable?
Are the rewards of making these changes worth the sacrifices?

Depending on how you answer, you may decide that the benefits of your current circumstances outweigh the costs, or you may determine that you need to make some changes to achieve the balance you seek.

How Do I Get Back on Track? If you've determined that you need to make some changes in the balance of your life, the following guidelines can help you get on the right track.

- ⇒ **Set Realistic Expectations.** You may not be able to have everything you want, at least not all at one time. Establish realistic expectations and ease up on yourself when possible.
- ⇒ **Prioritize.** Determine what tasks you need to accomplish, then rank them according to importance.
- ⇒ **Set Realistic Goals.** Be flexible and realistic in planning your schedule. Focus on things you know you can accomplish. At the same time, learn to expect the unexpected.
- ⇒ **Modify Responsibilities.** Sharing responsibilities is a good strategy to try at home.
- ⇒ **Be Efficient.** Develop ways to work smarter at home and at work. Combining or consolidating tasks may be more effective than trying to squeeze as many tasks as possible into the least amount of time.
- ⇒ **Think Positively.** Try to recognize that changes in your routine may be difficult at first. Don't blame yourself or others for limitations. Solving problems, not blaming others, produces positive change.

For more information regarding the above, check out the website or Make the Call!

**GREATER MICHIGAN
DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

APWU

**UNITED STATES
POSTAL SERVICE**

NRLCA



by Lynn Pallas-Barber,
National
Business Agent

NBA Report

Friend Or Foe ? ? ?

Is there anybody in Congress that gives a damn about saving the USPS? That is the question we need to ask ourselves these days. It appears that more than ever Congress is supporting the privatization of the USPS. The *Washington Times* blamed postal workers' benefits and high labor costs as the real reason for the current financial strain of the USPS. The fight over legislation to reform the USPS has now been introduced by both parties, with bills in both the House and the Senate. The goal of some of our representatives is to destroy the USPS, not to save it. The plan is also to end the collective bargaining unit rights of all postal employees. An amendment was introduced to remove postal employees from FECA. Our struggle surely continues and we need to stay involved politically.

These attacks against the USPS are also an attack against our Union. The USPS is the second largest employer in this country second only to Wal-Mart. If Congress kills the USPS, then it kills our Union, collective bargaining and workers contracts. Other Unions will not be safe. We know that collective bargaining has been under constant battle in our home States as well.

The USPS and its leaders support privatization. The Postmaster General, himself has gained recognition for his support of privatization. The ink was not yet dry on our contract and he was submitting proposals to Congress that would support privatization and nullify our contract. There certainly is no friend to be found in USPS management! The USPS is under attack everywhere in the media. The other morning watching *The Today Show* on NBC a panel of alleged professionals discussed the current status of the USPS

and their conclusion was privatization. We must keep the faith and stay politically vigilant !!!

CONGRESS GRANTS THE USPS AN EXTENSION

In December Congress did pass a massive funding bill that delivered an eight (8) month reprieve to the USPS. Buried within a spending package that funds government operating costs through September 2012 is language giving the USPS until August to prefund the thousands of prepaid benefits for retirees. This action taken by Congress prevented management from defaulting on the \$5.5 Billion payment for prefunded retiree health benefits. This bill also requires six (6) day delivery. The USPS is seeking sweeping legislation to reduce the deliveries and close thousands of Pos and mail processing centers.

The action congress takes this year in 2012 will be critical to us as postal workers. This reprieve does not make Congress our friend. Postal reform promises to be a big issue for the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Chairman D. Issa (R-California) still wants to make sure that over 130,00 postal workers are let go without any kind of benefits. He wants to abrogate all of the union rights of postal workers. The election in 2012 becomes more critical everyday.

THE "NTFT" NIGHTMARE

Everyone by now knows what a NTFT (Non-Traditional Full Time) assignment is. What was intended to be a good thing in our contract and provide our members with more choices and provide some flexibility to the USPS has turned out to be a fiasco. The PTFs and PTRs that were converted on August 28, 2011 did not have bid duty assignments to bid. They were improperly assigned

as unencumbered regulars to schedules of less than 40 hours. That assignment was not supported by our contract and numerous grievances have been filed. A national level dispute was heard in December. This hearing also included the dispute on retreat rights to NTFTs.

As in the past, management takes contract language and mismanages and abuses the language. That's exactly what they have done with the NTFTs. If it's up to them there will be very few traditional, 40 hour, 5 days a week bid duty assignments left. In Function 1 in the 200 or more man year facilities NTFT duty assignments will have consecutive days off. Only 50% of all the duty assignments in those facilities can be NTFT. Well they have abused that in some of our P&DFs. They have abolished traditional assignments and posted NTFT bid assignment working 6 days a week.

In Function 4 (retail) a huge number of traditional assignments have been reposted as NTFT less than 40 hours and the remainder of the hours is being back filled by PSEs. Where a NTFT works 5 hours they are being forced to take an hour lunch. They also are working NTFTs over and above their normal daily and weekly indentified hours. Everyday scheduling has now become an emergency. They are paying more Out-of-Schedule premium than ever before. The NTFT roll-out disputes are processed through ADRP. As I am currently handling Michigan contract cases, I am anxiously awaiting to meet at my level on this nightmare. We had a telecom with our HQ on November 9 and the reports of the abuse are nationwide. The Locals have my sympathy and feel free to call.

EXCESSING

Management in the Great Lakes Area is continuing to move forward with excessing. On November 16th they issued an impact statement based on BPI and volume reduction. The total number of impacted clerk employees in the district is 96. That number breaks down like this:

Gaylord PDC	6 FTRs
Grand Rapids PDC	29 FTRs
Iron Mountain PDC	5 FTRs
Kalamazoo PDC	15 FTRs
Lansing PDC	23 FTRs
Saginaw PDC	15 FTRs
Traverse City PDC	3 FTRs

After calling the Locals to give them a heads-up, I was informed that most facilities are working beaucoup OT and penalty OT and so now more clerks will get excessed. Does it make sense?? A telecom with the Great Lakes Area was held on December 13 & 14, 2011. These impacts are in spite of the anticipated AMPs that are also being conducted.

We had a scheduled meeting for

December 13th on the impact for the Chicago Cardlis Collins Installation based on alleged Function 4 reviews of all the stations in the city of Chicago. That impact is for 214 Level 6 FTRs. Management went through the stations and created a number of NTFTs, and so now they are going to excess. This impact statement was so large it came in a cardboard box. This installation also has a pending AMP. They are attacking us ferociously. This impact has recently been reduced to 187. The provided the Union with 51 residual carrier vacancies within the District.

Traditional FTRs have a choice when it comes to retreat right. Our excessed employees whether excessed within the installation and/or outside the craft or installation DO NOT have to retreat to any NTFT residual bid duty assignments. If they employees choose not to retreat to a NTFT, they will still maintain their retreat rights to a traditional residual vacancy.

The Great Lakes Area has recently cancelled the Area meeting for Bloomington, IL, Fox Valley, IL and South Suburban, IL. These are the largest mail processing facilities in the Central IL District. These are being rescheduled in February.

MLK, Jr.

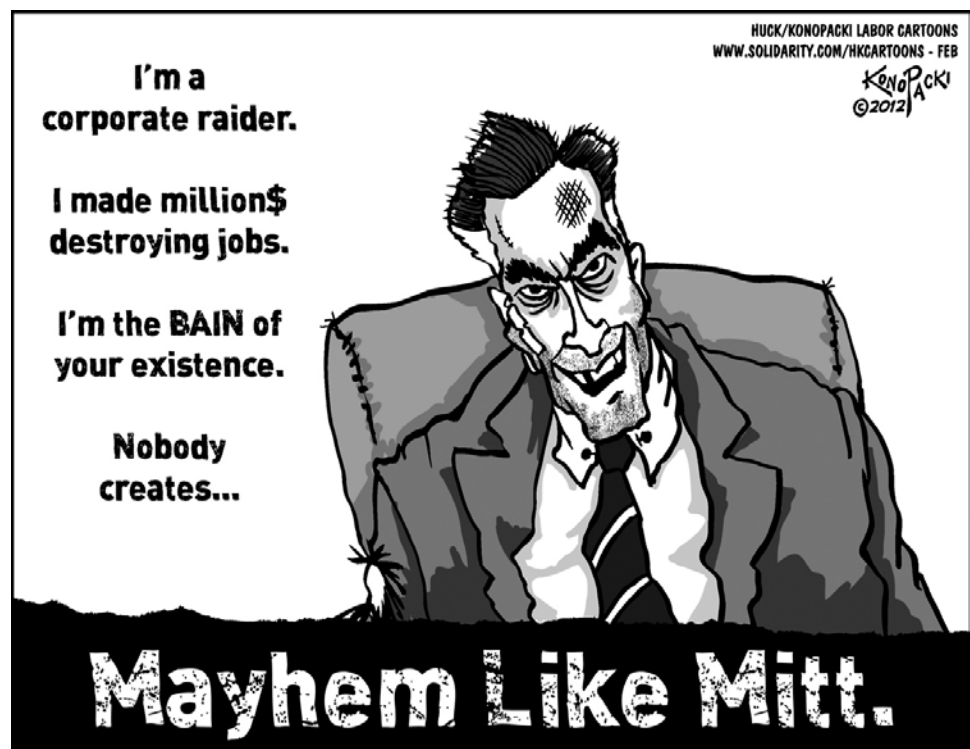
While in Atlanta in December 2011, I had the opportunity to visit the Martin Luther King Museum. This part of Atlanta is now a national park. The museum was a real tribute to Dr. King and his memory. The church where his father had preached and his childhood home were still standing. Looking at all the photos in the museum brought back a lot of memories. Those were extremely trying times in our country. When we look back I hope that we remember his message of hope and peace. Often times I think that his message maybe forgotten and lost by many these days. His memory should be special to us. He was a friend to all working people, no matter what race or creed. He believed that there was a special dignity in working people.

"All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence"
— MLK

"Leadership is an opportunity to serve. It is not a trumpet call to self-importance."

— A quote by Donald Walters
"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it."

— A quote by Maya Angelou
And with those words of wisdom,
Yours in Union Solidarity,
Until next time.





by Linda
Turney
National
Business Agent

Turney Talks

How To Prevent Employee Intimidation — Weingarten Rights

One of the most vital functions of a Union steward is to prevent employee intimidation. During investigatory interviews, employees have Weingarten rights. This investigatory interview is a requirement of Article 16 and it occurs when a supervisor or inspector questions an employee to obtain information that could be used as a basis for discipline or asks the employee about his/her conduct. The employee must make a clear request to have a Union steward. S/He will not be disciplined for doing so. After the request for a steward is made, the employer must:

1. Make a steward available; or
2. Deny the request and end the interview

Locals should encourage our members to assert their Weingarten rights because the presence of a steward can help in many ways.

The steward can:

1. Raise extenuating facts and circumstances.
2. Serve as a witness to prevent supervisors from giving false accounts of the conversation.
3. Assist a fearful or inarticulate employee explain his/her side of the story.
4. Prevent an employee from making a fatal admission.
5. Assist the employee in keeping a cool head so as not to get fired for insubordination.

The steward has a right to assist and counsel the employee during the interview. The steward should take the employee aside for a pre-interview discussion. The steward may request that a question be clarified before it is answered. The steward may give advice on how to answer. The steward does not have a right to tell the employee to give false answers or to refuse to answer. We must cooperate, but we should do so in accordance with our rights.

We have new PSEs who will be getting or have already achieved their Article 16 rights. Please be sure to inform them they must ask for their steward in these circumstances. Most PSEs will be new to Unions and to having labor rights. Let them know.

THE INFORMED MEMBER

One of the greatest challenges in our Union is communicating to our members. We often tell stewards that at step 2 the Union owns the grievance. This is true, but to leave a grievant out of the grievance process is not only wrong but in many cases detrimental. When filing a grievance, try to keep the grievant in the loop as to the status of the grievance and who is discussing

it. While it is not required, stewards could make copies of the grievance file for the Grievant. The Grievant could possibly assist the steward in making additional arguments during the course of the procedure.

It makes for a happier and more informed member.

REVISIONS TO THE F-101 HANDBOOK

On October 6, 2011, the Postal Service revised the F101 Handbook regarding Postal Quarter Counts for Cash and Retained Credit and Cash Reserve. It was revised to include the new count frequency, and a new authorized tolerance amount for employee retained credit and case reserve. Offices with POS ONE under Segmented Inventory Accountability must be audited randomly at least once per postal quarter which was changed from at least once a month. The new

count frequency of once a postal quarter will allow the employee to have a tolerance of only \$10.00

This information can be found on page 25 in Postal Bulletin 22321, dated October 6, 2011.

POLITICS IN 2012

Getting involved politically will be the only way to save our jobs. The political atmosphere may bring us a Republican Senate and a continuation of a Republican House. Many Republicans believe in one thing, defeat President Obama in November. President Obama remains our one defense to keep the Postal Service viable.

Republicans don't know how to create jobs, curtail greed, take money out of politics, address growing poverty or work with Democrats for the common good to solve the nation's problems. There has been no plan to strengthen

the rapidly shrinking middle class.

If we continue to allow ourselves, the middle class, to be fooled again by false-hoods and bumper sticker slogans of half truths, then shame on us. An overwhelming majority of voters are struggling to make ends meet yet we continue to vote against our own self interests. This election year, let us focus on educating our members to vote in the best interest of labor and our jobs.

NEW ADDRESS

By the time you receive this publication, our downtown office will be moved. We are presently packing and moving to:

**American Postal Workers Union
55 East Jackson Street Suite 400
Chicago IL 60604-4466**

The Suite number is not determined at this writing. It is smaller square footage but a more modern space.



by Michael
O'Hearn,
National
Business Agent

NBA Report

Postal Support Employees Or PSE's

on a seniority basis. Since casuals are eliminated as of 8-23-11, there can be no dual appointment rural route casuals and clerk casuals after this date. The great thing about this new position is that for the first time, all APWU craft positions will be bargaining unit positions that can join the union, including these non-career PSE positions. Also, there will be a strong incentive for the PSEs to join or they will not get the benefit of management paying 75% of their health insurance premium. This provides us a great opportunity to organize this category of employees. I believe we should welcome these new union brothers and sisters with open arms and help them to assimilate into our workplace.

The old contract had language about casuals not working jobs that require training and testing. This provision is not in the new contract for PSEs. Therefore, PSE's can work the window. However, there are restrictions. In level 22 offices and above, PSEs are limited in working the window to 10% of the career window clerks. In level 21 offices and below, PSEs are limited in working the window to 20% of the career window clerk. The round up rule of .5 and above applies. If you do the math, this means in level 21 offices and below, there must be at least three career window clerks for a PSE to work

the window.

In offices that still have PTFs (Level 20 and below), every effort will be made to insure that qualified and available PTFs are utilized at the straight-time rate prior to assigning such work to PSEs. This means that PTFs should not be sent home if PSEs are still working in the office and the PTFs are not getting forty hours in a service week or eight hours on that particular day. Additionally, when overtime is called by management, qualified and available full-time employees on the Overtime Desired List will be used first before PSEs are assigned overtime work. All the hours worked by PSEs, can be used to create desirable duty assignments for career employees to bid per Article 37 Section 3 A. 1. Also, all the hours worked by PSEs can be used to maximize the number of full-time employees as outlined in Article 7 Section 3. B.

I hope this helps you in dealing with the new PSE positions.



Senate To Vote On Postal Bill

APWU Members Must Take Action NOW!

The APWU has learned that the Senate will consider postal legislation very soon, and President Cliff Guffey is asking union members to contact their senators immediately and tell them that the 21st Century Postal Service Act (S. 1789) is unacceptable in its current form. “The stakes couldn’t be higher,” Guffey said.

As currently written, the bill would give the USPS some short-term financial relief, but also would inflict long-term damage to the nation’s mail system, he said.

“The bill would force the Postal Service to close hundreds of mail processing centers, shut thousands of post offices, and cause massive delays in mail delivery,” the APWU

president said. “By failing to give more substantial financial relief, the bill would weaken the Postal Service, kill jobs, and drive customers away,” he added.

“APWU members have done an outstanding job of expressing our concerns to their senators and representatives,” Guffey added. “At this critical time, union members must continue to let them know where we stand.”

The union is seeking support for amendments to:

- Set strict service standards. (This is crucial, because the Postal Service is planning to degrade delivery standards in order to eliminate more than half of all mail processing facilities.)
- Allow the USPS to recover over-

payments the Postal Service made to its retiree pension funds.

- Adequately address the requirement that forces the USPS pre-fund future retiree health benefits. (This mandate is the primary cause of the agency’s financial crisis. No other government agency or private company bears this burden, which costs the USPS approximately \$5.5 billion annually.)
- Establish new ways to generate revenue, such as providing notary services, issuing licenses, contracting with state and local agencies to provide services, and allowing the USPS to offer services that mail systems in many other countries provide, such as digital services.
- Prevent the closing of small post

offices by giving the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) binding authority to prevent closures based on the effect on the community and employees.

- Protect six-day delivery.
 - Eliminate the provision that would drastically reduce the compensation of workers who are injured on duty once they reach retirement age.
 - Repeal the provision that would require arbitrators in postal contract negotiations to consider the financial health of the USPS. (Postal unions note that arbitrators routinely do so, and criticize the provision as an attempt to skew contract negotiations in favor of management.)
- “We must not allow this bill to destroy service to the American people,” Guffey said.

Postal Workers Have The Right To Speak Out Against Facility Closures

Recent notices posted by management have generated questions about APWU members’ right to participate in activities opposing the closure of postal facilities. Postal employees have the right to:

- Circulate petitions;
- Participate in public meetings;
- Encourage others to attend public meetings;
- Encourage local merchants and

business organizations to speak out against postal closings;

- Contact elected officials to urge them to oppose postal closings.
- Postal workers may engage in all of the activities listed above, provided they are off-the-clock.

“It is essential that all union members speak out to the maximum extent possible to prevent the unnecessary closure of postal facilities,” said

APWU President Cliff Guffey. “We will not allow USPS management to discourage our members from exercising their First Amendment rights.”

ANTI-LOBBYING ACT DOESN’T APPLY

The Anti-Lobbying Act, which the USPS cited in a Jan. 13 LiteBlue posting, prohibits the use of government funds — or postal funds — to urge private citizens to communicate with Congress about issues of concern to the Postal Service. As long as postal workers are acting on their own time and are not using postal funds, however, they can speak against and actively oppose facility closures without violating the Anti-Lobbying Act.

A one-page list linked to the LiteBlue posting outlines permissible and prohibited activities under the Anti-Lobbying Act, but neglects to mention that activities listed as “impermissible” are impermissible only if they are done on postal time or using postal funds or facilities. They do not apply to activities conducted off-the-clock and outside postal facilities.

The LiteBlue posting also mentions a prohibition on the disclosure of non-public postal information. Postal employees who have access to non-public information may not reveal it to unauthorized individuals.

Once again, however, this restriction is irrelevant to opposition to postal closures. Our activities rely on non-restricted public information. If the union believes that restricted or non-public information is relevant and necessary, the APWU can officially request access to such information.

CAMPAIGNS ABOUT MAIL SERVICE

Another management document that causes confusion about employees’ rights is Section 667.12 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), which states that postal workers must not “engage in campaigns for or against changes in mail service.” However, the same provision also states that it “must not be construed to infringe upon the rights to participate in labor organizations.”

More than 15 years ago, on June 11, 1996, the Postal Service Vice President for Labor Relations issued instructions to the field confirming the right of postal workers to participate in peaceful informational picketing directed to the public, notwithstanding the language of ELM. Those instructions remain in effect.

There is no question that postal employees have a constitutional right, protected by the First Amendment, to participate in public meetings, make public statements opposing the closure or consolidation of postal facilities, and speak out against the reduction of postal services — because those actions by the Postal Service are matters of public concern.

“I urge our members to circulate petitions, attend meetings, and call and write legislators,” Guffey said. “Do these things on your own time, but do them!”

Postal managers on official time, or using their official authority, may not work for or against our efforts on behalf of the Postal Service. If any postal manager uses his or her official position to attempt to influence your work on these issues, please contact the APWU national office.

HELPING HAND UP

Ms. Sue Carney of National has contacted all State and Local Presidents and asked if we could help out with the upcoming APWU Stand Down. Stand Down is the program of giving back to our Veterans and U. S. Service members who have sacrificed so much to enrich and protect the lives of Americans. As she said “*it is an absolute disgrace that in the Home of the Brave, millions of our brave are unemployed, underserved, hungry and homeless. It must feel terrible to have served your Country only to be left behind. So to kick off the New Year and give back in a big way, the APWU will be participating in the Veterans’ Administration Winterhaven Stand Down; making it the fifth consecutive year we have given a Hand Up to homeless Veterans’.*” Each Veteran receives a backpack filled with food, warm clothing, toiletries and survival gear to help get them through their cold days and bitter nights. Ms. Carney has asked each Local and State if they could possibly donate **.50 cents per member**, to ensure that the National has enough funding for 2012 to sponsor the Support Programs favored by our troops, wounded warriors and Veterans’ such as the *Stand Down, Movie Nights, Appreciation Barbeque, Fast Food Favorites, Operation Valentine, and more.* The National is asking that all donations be received by **MARCH 31, 2012.** Spread the word amongst everyone you work with, whether a member or not, craft or not, hell, even show it to your Supervisors, .50 cents isn’t that much. If you collect any monies for this worthwhile program, just give it to your steward and have them drop it off for you at your local, or send it along to Darren Joyce, the MPWU Secretary-Treasurer.

NOTE from our Veterans Director – John Smeekens – **This is not a challenge!** To start off the Program, I am donating \$50.00, to Darren Joyce, to get things rolling. I myself will be covering the cost of 99 members, and myself. This is for our Veterans’. It isn’t political, nor is it religious. This is for those who put their lives on the line for the cause of **FREEDOM!**

THANK YOU

PRC Blasts USPS Retail Closure Plan

The Postal Service plans to close a many as 3,600 retail facilities is based on questionable data, Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) recently concluded.

In a Dec. 23 advisory opinion [PDF], the PRC challenged the methods with which the Postal Service developed its “Retail Access Optimization Initiative,” charging that the USPS lacked sufficient data for determining which closures would reduce costs the most and that it lacked sufficient data and analysis to make the best decisions.

The USPS plan does not “determine the facilities most likely to serve the greatest number, reduce the greatest costs, or enhance the potential for growth or stability in the system,”

PRC Chairman Ruth Goldway said in a statement accompanying the report.

The PRC also found the USPS selection process failed to adequately consider whether an alternate post office was nearby. Goldway said that the USPS failed to give “careful consideration” to “each individual community’s needs,” charging that the panel’s review of challenges to closings reveals “a pattern of inaccurate and overly optimistic economic savings calculations and of careless disregard of community concerns.” The USPS, she added, demonstrated “an ongoing institutional bias within the Postal Service that presumes closing small post offices automatically provides cost savings and network efficiencies.”

The PRC’s criticism of the post office closure plan echoes concerns expressed by the APWU, consumer groups, and other mail users in recent months. “Closing post offices and slashing service to the American people is not the answer to the Postal Service’s financial crisis,” said APWU President Cliff Guffey. “The USPS is well aware of the cause of its financial difficulties,” he added. “They cannot cut their way to fiscal health.”

The Postal Service unveiled its list of more than 3,600 facilities post offices, stations and branches — about 11 percent of its retail network — targeted for closure studies on July 26, 2011 and its goal was to make final determinations by the end of 2011. Under

pressure from legislators on Capitol Hill, however, the USPS announced a five-month moratorium on the closure of post offices and mail processing facilities. The delay until May 15, 2012, is intended to give Congress more time to adopt legislation that would address the USPS financial crisis without drastic cuts in service.

By law, the Postal Service must request an advisory opinion from the PRC when proposed changes would have a nationwide impact on service. Although the panel’s opinion is non-binding, it supports the case that the APWU and others are making to Congress that slashing the postal network will hurt service and invite the demise of the nation’s mail system.

— Interesting Facts —

U.S. labor unions picked up 49,000 new members in 2011

Young people between 16 and 24 years old accounted for almost a third of the new jobs, the country’s biggest labor federation, the AFL-CIO, reported Friday. “Good union jobs are beginning to come back,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, “despite an unprecedented volley of partisan political attacks on workers’ rights and the continuing insecurity of our economic crisis.”

Overall, unions gained 110,000 new jobs in the private sector last year. Part of that gain was offset by the loss of 61,000 public sector posts.

Union members accounted for 37% of public sector positions, up slightly from 36.2% in 2010. However, they represented just 6.9% of private employment in both years, the AFL-CIO said.

The biggest gains in union membership were in construction, healthcare services, retail trade, primary metals and fabricated metal products, hospitals and transportation, the union said, citing U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

CBO Report on S.1789 Could Kill Postal Reform in the Senate

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate on S. 1789, the 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2011, most likely killed Senate action on postal reform. The National Association of Postmasters – US (NAPUS) posted that S.1789 was bumped in the legislative queue until a date uncertain. By bumping S.1789, the Senate leadership indicated that even though the Postal Service faces the prospect of shutdown this September, there is now enough opposition to the bill that protracted debate is not only possible but likely.

Drive Safely with Winter Weather

In Michigan, any day could be a snow day, so it’s important to stay safe, especially when travelling long distances. The

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers a travel advisory service that can be accessed on their website.

MDOT also recommends that motorists:

- Always wear a safety belt when in a vehicle.
- Slow down when visibility is low and/or when road conditions are snowy or icy.
- When parking or driving, give snow-

plow drivers plenty of room to plow and salt.

- Be extra cautious on bridges because they can be icy even when roadways are dry.
- Accelerate and brake slowly and avoid abrupt steering maneuvers, especially when merging or changing lanes.
- Don’t pump anti-lock brakes.
- Don’t text or talk on cell phones while driving.

Enjoy Michigan’s Free Fishing Weekend Feb. 18 and 19

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources reminds everyone the annual Winter Free Fishing Weekend is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 18 and Sunday, Feb. 19. On that weekend, everyone – residents and non-residents alike – can fish without a license, though all other fishing regulations still apply.

Celiac Disease

Celiac Disease is a hereditary autoimmune disorder of the small intestine and affects a wide range of people regardless of race or age. Currently this disorder affects 1 in 105 people and while in the past it has gone undetected, through screenings and education more cases are being found everyday. This disorder is a result of the body’s reaction to the protein found in wheat, rye and barley. When consumed these proteins react with the immune system causing inflammation in the intestine which in turn interferes with the absorption of nutrients. This lack of nutrients can cause vitamin deficiencies that deprive your brain, peripheral nervous system, bones, liver and other organs of vital nourishment.

People with celiac disease have a higher chance of developing:

- Autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erthematosus, and sjogren syndrome
- Addison’s disease
- Down syndrome
- Intestinal cancer
- Intestinal lymphoma
- Lactose intolerance
- Thyroid disease
- Type 1 diabetes

Symptoms of Celiac Disease include:

- Bruising easily
- Depression or anxiety
- Fatigue
- Growth delay in children
- Hair loss
- Itchy skin
- Missed menstrual periods
- Mouth ulcers
- Muscle cramps and joint pain
- Nosebleeds
- Seizures
- Tingling or numbness in the hands or feet
- Unexplained short height

If you feel that you or a family member has Celiac Disease please consult your medical professional for testing. No treatment can cure celiac disease, however, you can effectively manage celiac disease by changing your diet. Members in the High Option can take advantage of the New Weight Management Program to see an in-network dietician/nutritionist to help you get on the path to a diet that meets your needs.



APWU
HEALTH PLAN
Live Life Well

www.apwuhp.com
(800) 222-2798

Do You Know Where Your Legislators Stand?

(This article was first published in the January/February 2012 issue of *The American Postal Worker* magazine.)

Lately, USPS management seems hell-bent on destroying the Postal Service — and some members of Congress have appeared eager to help.

In December, however, in response to protests by postal workers, small businesses and community leaders, 22 senators persuaded the USPS to adopt a five-month moratorium on the closure of post offices and mail processing centers. The moratorium is intended to give Congress more time to adopt legislation to address the Postal Service crisis.

Instead of eliminating overnight mail, the USPS should be developing ways to provide speedier mail delivery, offer new services, and adapt.

This is a great testament to our hard work — but the reprieve is temporary. If the USPS proceeds with the plan in May, it will lead to a downward spiral of cuts in service followed by declining revenue, leading to more cuts in service, and ultimately, to the demise of the Postal Service.

We will have to keep up the pressure to stop USPS plans to close thousands of post offices and more than half of the nation's mail processing facilities. And

Congress is key.

Do you know where your representative and senators stand?

A BAD BILL

You may recall that in 2006, Congress passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), which saddled the Postal Service with annual payments of \$5.5 billion to pre-fund future retiree healthcare costs. No other government agency or private company bears this burden, which has driven the Postal Service to the brink of insolvency.

The APWU opposed the PAEA and has devoted extensive effort toward building support in Congress for a solution to the financial mess it created. Our Legislative and Political Department, led by Director Myke Reid, has done a great job lining up support for H.R. 1351, which would correct the underlying cause of the problem. The bill, introduced by Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), would allow the Postal Service to apply overpayments the USPS made to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) to the pre-funding mandate.

Locals and state organizations have

done excellent work as well, winning broad, bipartisan support for this important legislation.

In September, the APWU joined with the other postal unions in a nationwide day of action at congressional offices across the country. Our activities helped raise awareness about the cause of the postal crisis and gain additional co-sponsors for H.R. 1351.

And APWU members across the country have done an outstanding job fighting facility consolidations and post office closures. Union members have rallied, picketed, attended public meetings, met with elected officials, talked with the media, and explained in explicit detail what closing post offices and mail processing facilities would mean for their communities.

Local activists have garnered the attention — and support — of legislators and residents of affected communities, and have led the resistance to the destruction of postal services in cities and towns across the nation.

DAUNTING HURDLES

Despite the valiant efforts we and others have waged, we continue to face significant obstacles.

Common misconceptions — that email and the Internet are responsible for the Postal Service's financial difficulties — give drastic USPS cutbacks an air of inevitability. But the real causes of the crisis — the pre-funding mandate and USPS overpayments to its pension funds — can be corrected by Congress.

We must make sure the politicians and the American people know that the demise of the Postal Service is not a foregone conclusion. We must remind them that the USPS is essential to our nation's communication and commerce. After all, the Postal Service still generates about \$65 billion in revenue annually and is the centerpiece of a \$1 trillion private-sector mailing industry.

And we must be clear: To thrive in the age of e-mail and the Internet, the USPS must modernize. Instead of eliminating overnight mail, the Postal Service should be developing ways to provide speedier mail delivery, offer new services, and adapt to changing methods of communication. The USPS cannot succeed if management surrenders or if privatizers plunder it.

The nation's polarized political climate also presents a daunting hurdle. Although more than half of the members of the House are on record as co-

sponsors, H.R. 1351 hasn't been given an up-or-down vote on the House floor.

Instead, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), chairman of the House Government Oversight and Reform Committee, wrote his own bill, H.R. 2309, which would force the Postal Service to cut \$3 billion from its retail and processing network over the next two years; nullify our negotiated protection against layoffs, and give a "solvency authority" the power to reject negotiated contracts it considers too costly. On the Senate side, although S. 1789 is not as bad as the Issa bill, it also would lead to a downward spiral of cuts, declining revenue and more cuts.

In November, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the Postal Service Protection Act, a bill that is similar to H.R. 1351. It would address the cause of the Postal Service's financial difficulties and safeguard service. S. 1853 may be gaining momentum.

A STARK CHOICE

As 2012 election year begins, we will be faced with a stark choice:

Are we going to re-elect representatives who advocate the demise of the Postal Service? Are we going to allow inaction and neglect to destroy our jobs? Are we going to endorse "trickledown" economics, despite 30 years of evidence that wealth does not trickle down?

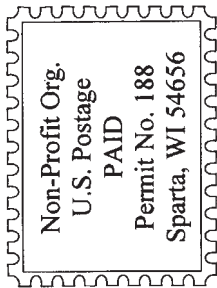
Or are we going to insist that our lawmakers support a vibrant, viable Postal Service?

Where do your legislators stand on these issues? Do they endorse a solution to the underlying cause of USPS financial difficulties, or do they believe that postal workers and public-employee unions are the problem? Do they support working families and a strong middle class? Or do they defend the failed policies of the past? The choices have never been clearer.

As the 2012 election season heats up, the APWU will be working hard to defend postal workers, public employees and the middle class. The situation is simply too serious for any of our members to sit on the sidelines.

We need you! So please, get involved. Stay informed; sign up for the APWU e-Team; give to COPA, the union's Committee on Political Action; support your local's efforts against consolidation and post office closings, and support candidates in 2012 who support us.

We have no time to waste!



Time Dated Information!
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