

# Michigan MESSENGER

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## President's Report

### One On Our Side, Who's Next?



by John  
Marcotte,  
President

I want to start out this article by thanking you the membership of the MPWU. It is your participation and efforts that made my recent trip to Washington DC possible and so successful. Working with the staffs of the Michigan congressional delegation I was able to educate and inform our elected representatives on the issues affecting the postal service. Particularly the disastrous changes USPS management will make to the postal service unless Congress takes action to stop them.

These discussions were well received and highly productive. The most visible result of this work was the letter sent to the Postmaster General from Senator Levin demanding accurate un-redacted data concerning the consolidations in Michigan (A copy of the letter is printed opposite of this column). Discussions back and forth with Harold Chase, Legislative Aide for Senator Levin throughout the week culminated in this superbly crafted letter. This is exactly the kind of grass roots effort that can and will derail managements accelerated efforts to dismantle the postal service piece by piece. Without your support by belonging to the MPWU this face-to-face appeal on our behalf would not be possible. The calls, letters and emails to Levin's offices protesting the actions of the USPS allowed me access I may not have otherwise received. You made the difference.

As your president I can't accomplish anything without the members support and I thank you. Now that we have the momentum it is time to go all out to stop this insanity. We need every one of you to contact Senator Stabenow's offices and urge her to write a similar letter of demand to the Postmaster General. She is highly supportive of the MPWU but we need her to prove our state is united against Network Realignment. Further

it is our position Michigan demands no action to reduce service standards, close post offices or close processing centers until all stakeholders and the effected communities make a full examination of accurate data.

If we all contacted Senator Stabenow and enlisted our community leaders, business owners and families to do the same we will prevail. All my contacts with the chamber of commerce have been extremely positive; businesses do not want Network Realignment. Do not hesitate to reach out and ask for your local business leaders support. Please do not forget to contact Senator Levin's office and thank him for his strong support of the MPWU and the people of Michigan on this issue. The fastest form of contact with both Senators is email and you can find their addresses on-line. Contact information is below.

#### Senator Carl Levin

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#### Senator Debbie Stabenow

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The District meeting in Lansing was a rousing success. Congratulations to Lucy Morton our Education Director and Mary Stephenson our Area 6 Director for organizing and hosting a wonderful event. It was extremely informative with topical, timely information on proper use of PSE's, NTFT assignments and in-depth Article 12 Training. This the first training in our new low cost format created to continue the flow of training while locals are in unsure and difficult financial times. The goal is to have more training sessions that are tailored to what the locals need when they need it. This low cost format allows

maximum participation. The MPWU owes Senior Central Region Clerk Craft NBA Lynn Pallas-Barber a huge debt of gratitude for instructing at an extremely high level over these emotional charged issues that are complicated and difficult

to grasp. Her attention to detail and willingness to guide and instruct union leaders through actual issues currently affecting their offices is a credit to the APWU.

Yours In Solidarity and Friendship.

CARL LEVIN MICHIGAN

### United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 24, 2012

The Honorable Patrick Donahoe  
Postmaster General  
U.S. Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260-0010

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:

I am Writing regarding your correspondence dated February 23,2012, which notified me of the potential consolidation of mail processing facilities in Michigan beginning in the summer of 2012.

The impacted facilities in Michigan are in Gaylord, Iron. Mountain, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Saginaw. You have provided an estimate of the annual savings from each closure and consolidation but no data on how these figures were reached. In order to better understand how the Postal Service reached its conclusions, please provide me with an unredacted copy of each Area Mail Processing Study (AMP) conducted for the facilities in Michigan.

During the public meetings relative to these proposals, members of the public asked questions and raised concern about these possible closures. I would appreciate knowing how the Postal Service addressed issues raised by the public and how public comment was considered during the AMP process.

As you provide this information, I am particularly interested in receiving answers to the following questions:

1. How many jobs will be eliminated at each facility?
2. Of those jobs, how many will be transferred to other facilities?
3. What is the distance of each transfer?
4. What are the additional projected savings and additional projected costs for each facility?

According to your letter, these consolidations are contingent on the issuance of a final rule revising first class mail standards. The Postal Service filed a request for an advisory opinion with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) regarding these revised standards on December 5, 2011. The PRC has opened a Docket to consider this request and is expected to issue an advisory opinion this summer. I have heard from my constituents that the Postal Service intends to proceed with these closures immediately following the expiration of the closure moratorium on May 15th. The Postal Service had agreed to this moratorium to allow Congress the time to consider postal reform legislation. I would appreciate your assurance that the Postal Service will wait until after the advisory opinion of the PRC has been issued before taking any steps relative to any mail processing facility closure.

While I fully understand the serious nature of the Postal Service's current financial situation and the need to take action, I am concerned that the Postal Service not take action that would erode the universal service obligation and want to analyze the conclusions of the. Postal Service relative to claimed savings.

Should you have any questions, please contact Harold Chase of my staff at (202) 2249125. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,  
  
Carl Levin

**2012 MPWU 23rd Biennial Constitutional,  
Retiree, And Auxiliary Convention  
May 31, June 1 - 2, 2012  
see page 3 for more details**

— The second letter appears on page 11. —



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by Michael A. Long, Editor

## Editor's Report

# We Are At The Circus – Bring Out The Clowns

### FEDERAL PAY

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters –

It almost sounds like the start of a Circus in the Big top right before a show; however, there is one similarity; a big one too. The circus has made them famous, and now the Postal Service and the Federal Government worker will make them famous again, but for another reason....clowns. This time however, it is the Republican party that has and is trying to destroy not only us, but the entire Federal workers from the inside out. I am not going to debate that there are some who are staunch Republicans that read this publication, and my article. I generally pride myself (for lack of a better saying) on being able to see both sides of story and being able to look past partisan talk and bickering; however, in this case, take a look at the following resolutions that have been sponsored/submitted by Republicans in the House and Senate, and you will definitely see why, for this one person, am mad as hell regarding what is happening. One can only surmise that we are at circus, and while I am not quite sure who the Ringmaster is, I can definitely point out each and every “clown.”

On February 29, 2012, I received the following e-Mail, entitled: “Union lists GOP initiatives to make federal workers pay – The Washington Post.” While I can’t print the entire e-Mail/article due to copyright infringement, I can copy the pertinent information here for you to review:

“The NTEU provided delegates meeting at the L’Enfant Plaza Hotel with a fact sheet listing about two dozen “legislative proposals harmful to the federal workforce,” all of which are sponsored by Republicans. Some of the bills overlap.

➤ **H.R. 270** would impose a mandatory two-week unpaid furlough for federal employees.

➤ **H.R. 3835** would extend the pay freeze for another year.

➤ **H.R. 3844** would prohibit within-grade “step” increases.

➤ **H.R. 235** proposes cuts to the federal workforce and a three-year pay freeze.

➤ **S. 2079** would extend the pay freeze for another year.

➤ **S. 2065** would cut the workforce and extend the freeze through June 30, 2014.

➤ **S. 1476** would extend the freeze through 2014 and prohibit employee bonuses.

➤ **S. 178 and H.R. 408** would extend the freeze through 2015 and limit the number of workers.

➤ **S. 1936** would extend the pay freeze from two years to five years and limit the number of staffers.

### Pensions

➤ **S. 644** would eliminate the defined benefit portion of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuity.

➤ **H.R. 3813** would sharply increase pension contributions, eliminate the FERS supplement and raise pension contributions for new hires. Federal workforce

➤ **H.R. 2114** would cut the federal workforce by 10percent by 2015.

➤ **H.R. 657** says all agencies other than Defense, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security — which account for 60 percent of the workforce — would be able to hire only one employee for every two who leave federal service.

➤ **H.R. 3029, H.R. 3487 and S. 1476** would reduce staffing through attrition by permitting the hiring of

only one employee for every three who leave government service.

➤ **H.R. 1779** would prohibit the head of any executive branch agency from hiring in any year in which the Office of Management and Budget projects a federal budget deficit.

➤ **S. 1611** would allow the hiring of one employee for every three who leave federal service.

➤ **H.R. 3494** would reduce the size of the federal workforce to no more than that of October 2007.

➤ **H.R. 3662** would allow the hiring of one employee for every three who leave federal service.

➤ **S. 178** would, among many other actions, limit the size of the federal workforce and extend the pay freeze through 2015.

### OTHER ISSUES

➤ **S. 261** would cut workers’ compensation payments for older federal employees.

➤ **H.R. 87 and S. 712** would repeal the Dodd-Frank financial regulatory reform law. Doing so would endanger some federal employee rights, according to NTEU.

➤ **HR – 7.** This bill would require a two (2%) percent increase in our retirement over three years. Taking away the Social Security Supplement Annuity for those who retire at their Minimum Retirement Age and until they reach the age to start collecting Social Security.

I do realize that we are in a crisis; however the crisis was not created by us, nor will it be fixed on our backs. If you notice though, none of these bills affect the people that are writing them. Coincidence, I think no.

In closing, I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve in this capacity of your Editor for the past two years. Your support and comments have made this job worthwhile. I look forward to seeing each of you at the upcoming convention in May in Traverse and at National.

As always, if I can be of any help, please do not hesitate to call.

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 Paul Felton, Legislative Director

## Legislative Report

# It's Not A Done Deal

I'm submitting this article after hearing a stand-up talk by our Plant Manager about the Postal Service's dire financial situation and the changes coming in the near future. He made it sound like a done deal. Starting real soon, service standards will be relaxed, plants will close, and in the plants that remain we'll be working different hours. He made us sound fortunate that we are a "gaining installation" and many of us will soon be working day shift.

Not so fast, I say. In the first 4 months of this fiscal year the Postal Service's revenue, \$23 billion, exceeded the operating expenses of \$22.9 billion. The only reason we're showing a net loss is that PAEA law passed in 2006 that makes USPS set aside money for retiree health benefits 75 years into the future.

Another reason I say "not so fast" is the news that Senator Carl Levin has stepped in and written to PMG Donahoe questioning the need to close (or massively downsize) plants in Gaylord, Iron Mountain, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Saginaw. A Republican Senator from Massachusetts, Scott Brown, has written a similar letter to the PMG.

In many parts of the country, large rallies have taken place protesting the closing of plants and Post Offices.

As you read these words, the hour is late but **it is not a done deal**. However, the active participation of members is vital. It is not enough to contact your Senators and Congressional Rep as an individual. You (we) need to get out into the community, and tell everyone we know about what is going on. To help you, I am reprinting some "talking points" I developed for our Local. I am also submitting a poem you can use to hopefully stir your coworkers into action.

### TALKING POINTS

These talking points are intended to be non-technical and user-friendly. I am not going to load you down with mountains of numbers and statistics. These are for your use when talking to small groups, individual friends, neighbors and extended family. I urge members to reach out, and to try to get speaking engagements for yourself or for a Union Officer at any organization, school, or other group that would be appropriate. And when using the talking points below, take what you feel comfortable with and add whatever you think is important from the [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) web site.

### THE 2006 LAW

- In 2006 Congress passed a law

that requires the Postal Service to set aside over 5 billion dollars a year into a special fund to guarantee there will be health benefits for retirees up to 75 years from now.

- This money cannot be used to cover current operating expenses.
- We are required to set aside money for people who haven't even been born yet!
- No other federal agency or private business is required to operate like this.
- Many of the Congressional Reps who voted for this would go ballistic if there was an attempt to require private business to operate this way.

### THE CONSEQUENCES

- The current plans being pushed by some in Congress and being pursued by postal management (given the financial crisis caused by Congress) will cause the Postal Service to become a shell of its former self.
- Plans include closing up to 3600 Post Offices and 300 processing plants.
- The Post Office closures will harm a lot of rural communities (where the Post Office is a community center) and a lot of urban areas (where many folks don't have reliable transportation).
- The closing of 300 plants will result in slower mail service – management has announced plans to change the service standards so mail that you have been getting overnight with a first class stamp will now take 2-3 days. This could be important mail with a deadline. It affects you regardless of where you live.
- The plant closings and the overall downsizing will hurt the economy. At a time when both political parties are talking about the importance of creating jobs, this is a step in the wrong direction.

● The Postal Service employs a high percentage of veterans (over 20 percent of our workforce). The proposed cutbacks would not only harm current employees who are veterans, but future employment opportunities for those returning from Iraq or Afghanistan would disappear.

### CUTBACKS NOT NECESSARY

- The Postal Service has been breaking even or actually coming out ahead, if you just take into account revenue versus operating expenses. The financial crisis USPS is a direct result of a Congressional attack on the Postal Service – first with the 2006 law and then with resistance to undoing the damage Congress caused.
- In other words, the widely circulated view that the Postal Service

demise was inevitable due to the rise of the Internet is simply a myth. The Postal Service would be doing just fine if not for Congressional interference.

### WHAT WE WANT

- Of course we want to preserve our jobs and our standard of living. Please recognize that our continued employment allows us to contribute to our community's tax base and our spending contributes to the economy.
- We want to maintain a reliable and efficient mail service that gets a first class letter anywhere in the country for just 45 cents in a very short time.
- We want to maintain Post Offices in every community in the country. The Postal Service was never intended to turn a profit; it was intended to break even and without Congressional interference we could do that. No community should be considered too tiny or too poor to be deserving of our service.
- Needed to be non-technical and user-friendly. I am not going to load you down with mountains of numbers and statistics. These are for your use when talking to small groups, individual friends, neighbors and extended family. I urge members to reach out, and to try to get speaking engagements for yourself or for a Union Officer at any organization, school, or other group that would be appropriate. And when using the talking points below, take what you feel comfortable with and add whatever you think is important from the [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) web site.

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*Mobilizing Poem on page 16*

# The Postal Service Has Gone Rogue

by John Marcotte,  
President

One of the greatest fears the American people have of our government is a governmental agency going off mission and instead of serving the American people serving themselves. There have been many movies and fiction novels written about intelligence or law enforcement agencies going off mission, breaking laws meant to guide and restrain their powers and causing hardship for the American people they were meant to serve. Conspiracy theories abound involving the CIA, FBI, Department Of Defense, Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve drifting off their missions and going rogue. What Hollywood and spy novelists never dreamed of was that the agency that would ignore laws enacted

to govern it's behavior, stop serving the American people while enriching its directors, all the while denying information to Congress. This would not be a recently formed agency but one founded by the second continental congress and outlined in Article One of the original Constitution. The United States Postal Service.

Congress legislated the Postal Department to become self-funding in 1970 mandating adjusting stamp increases to cover expenses. In this law Congress wisely required the newly formed USPS to universally serve all of America equally, rural and urban and forbidding closing post offices for purely financial reasons. This ensured self-funding did not turn the post office into a for profit enterprise looking to abandon unprofitable rural America.

Additional requirements mandated that all individual classes of mail will support the cost of its delivery were enacted. So one type of mail does not subsidize another and the Postal Service does not rely too heavily on one source of revenue. From 1970 forward the speed of service steadily improved and the cost of postage rose less than the rate of inflation. America had the fastest and most affordable postal system in the world.

Outstanding service to the American people wasn't good enough for postal executives who insisted on postal reform legislation in 2006. They testified to Congress the USPS, which by mandate has never made a profit, could prepay 6 billion dollars a year toward future retiree healthcare while capping future postage increases to the rate of

inflation regardless of actual increases in fuel and other costs. The result was the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), which provided no accountability for postal managers and only enhanced their pay and benefits. This law did result in the obvious and inevitable bankrupting of the USPS and the intentional explosion of postal executives pay and benefits.

The record is clear what led to the postal revenue shortage that PAEA was suppose to fix was purposely created by postal management. In their pursuit of increasing mail volume that triggered management bonuses, postal executive pressed for low postage rates to bulk mailers that did not pay for the cost of processing and delivery of corporate America's advertising mail.

*continued on page 7*

## 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 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 National 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 business, 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 delegates, present from their Area only.

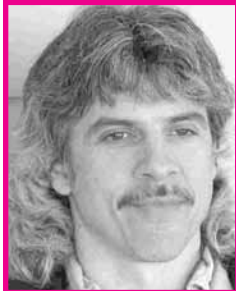
If a Craft or Area Director is not represented by at least one delegate to the Convention, or if there are no candidates from a specific Craft or Area, for the position of Craft or Area Director, then the President shall appoint a member of that Craft or Area to that position, with the advise and consent 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 Richard  
Blake,  
Clerk Craft  
Director

*In light of recent developments, all of which are most assuredly intended to push the Postal Service into a death spiral, I decided to skip yet another article dealing with Clerk Craft contractual issues, and to attach excerpts from the outstanding 1-24-12 article from the "Save The Post Office" website:*

#### Save the Post Office, 1-24-12

In her excellent book **Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal**, historian Kim Phillips-Fein paints a very revealing picture of how the corporate class operates. Her theme is the way conservative businessmen worked behind the scenes to undo the New Deal. Believing all would be right if government stayed out of the economy and left everything, in Adam's Smith famous expression, to the "invisible hand" of the market, these businessmen have spent decades working to weaken unions, eliminate social welfare programs, minimize government regulation of their companies, and diminish public services.

While the U.S. Postal Service is obviously not a product of the New Deal, that same conservative agenda is behind the attack on the Postal Service we're witnessing today. Cutting the workforce, closing post offices and plants, and moving toward privatization through outsourcing and divestiture of assets — these are all part of an effort to shape the postal system in ways that serve the interests of an elite business class rather than the good of the country as a whole. The free-market ideology and greed for profits that drove efforts to undo the New Deal are basically what's driving the "postal reform" movement today.

There are many industry associations that are influencing the policies of the Postal Service, such as the **National Alliance of Standard Mailers (NASM)**; **DFW Mailers Association**; **Alliance of Non-profit mailers**; **Association of Priority Mail Users (APMU)**; **Mail Systems Management Association (MSMA)**; **Mail Order Association of America (MOAA)**; **Parcel Shippers Association (PSA)**; **National Newspaper Association (NNA)**; and **Magazine Publishers of America (MPA)**.

The corporate stakeholders represented by these organizations are not monolithic in their views. But most big mailers are primarily interested in keeping postal rates as low as possible. They have generally supported the cost-cutting measures proposed by the Postal Service because they believe the cuts will keep rates down and their profits up. Back in August, for example, the DMA "applauded" the proposed

# Clerk Craft Report

## Save The Post Office

cuts, and in the RAOI Advisory Opinion process, the direct marketing giant Val-Pak made a forceful argument for closing post offices because they lose money and consequently drive up postage rates.

Most of these stakeholders don't care about post offices because big mailers present their mail at Bulk Mail Entry Units, and Saturday delivery is not a major concern either because ad mail would do fine with even **three-day delivery** (which the Postmaster General says is coming within fifteen years). **The industry doesn't care about having a blue collection box on every corner** — over the past twenty years, half of

happy. The corporate class as a whole does not like the good wages that unions make happen. Postal clerks average \$25 an hour, while the sales associates and cashiers at Walmart average \$8.50 an hour. Good wages at the post office help bring wages up across the economy, while poor wages at Walmart drive them down.

Since union contracts have made it difficult for the leaders of the Postal Service to reduce the size of the workforce as drastically and rapidly as it would like, they have used other tactics. **Outsourcing**, for example, is a great way to shift work from postal employees to non-union workers in private indus-

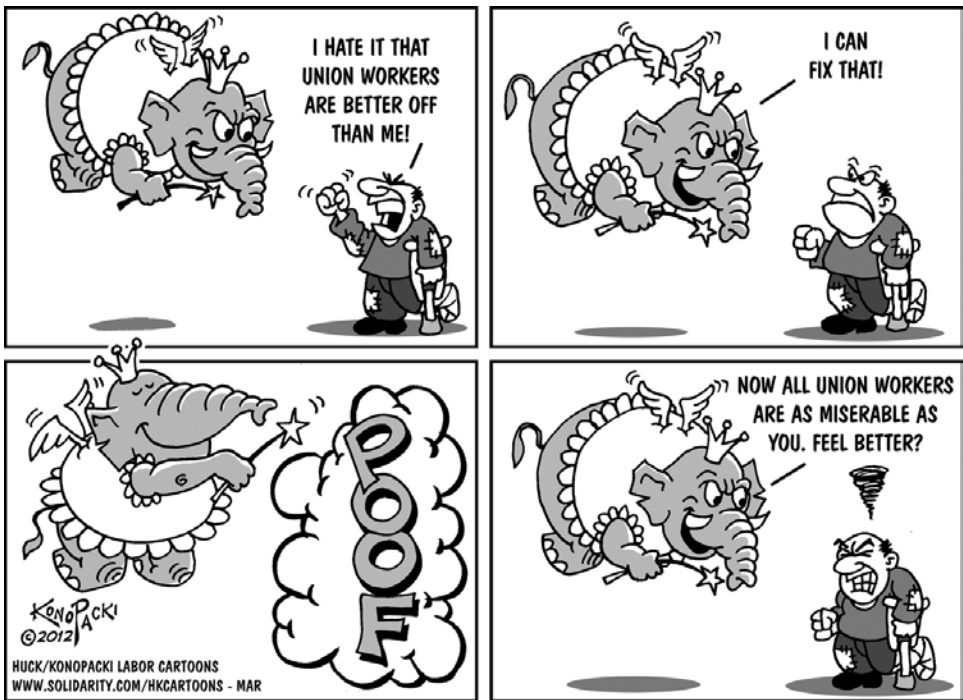
**Postal Privatization** by labor historian Sarah Ryan.)

It's not just the Koch brothers who are contributing to the postal legislators. **Pitney Bowes** is \$5.6 billion-a-year business employing 33,000 workers around the world, selling mail equipment and providing marketing through mail. It's based in Stamford, Connecticut, so no surprise that it has contributed generously to the campaign of Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman, chair of the Homeland Security Committee, which deals with postal legislation. In 2011, Pitney Bowes also contributed **\$10,000 to Darrell Issa** and **\$10,000 to Senator Susan Collins** of Maine, another key player in postal legislation. (If you're interested in doing some detective work, **Influence Explorer** and **Open Secrets** are useful sites.)

For the past four decades, postal privatization has remained the Holy Grail for the conservative business elite. All the books and articles put out by the think tanks and their scholars, all the lobbying and campaign contributions, all the organizing and behind-the-scenes networking — the goal has remained constant. **The free market ideologues will be satisfied with nothing less than the privatization of the postal system.** In the meantime, the mantra is the same: The Postal Service needs to act more "like a business." If it can't be turned into a private corporation, it should at least act like one. **If a post office isn't bringing in a profit (80 to 90 percent of them don't, at least the way the Postal Service runs the numbers), then close it. If career employees can be replaced by part-time casuals or contract workers, replace them.** If there's "excess capacity" in the system, get rid of it. **If there's a way to undermine the unions, drive down wages, degrade benefits, do it.**

As for average citizens, they just don't seem to be very important to postal management. They are not big customers. The services they might like to see offered at the post office — like an Internet connection or low-cost banking services — aren't very profitable. Sometimes one even gets the impression that the Postal Service is intentionally alienating its regular customers — causing long lines by reducing the staffing at the windows, not being responsive to complaints, demoralizing postal workers so it's difficult for them to be courteous. Perhaps management thinks it's not so bad if people are dissatisfied with the Postal Service. Maybe it will make them happy to hear about plans to privatize. In 1970, when the U.S. population was about 200 million and first-class mail volumes were not quite

*continued on page 10*



them have disappeared, even as the FedEx boxes have become ubiquitous — and they don't care how often the mail is picked up at those boxes. Their interests, in other words, are not those of the average citizen and small business. But they are one of the strongest forces shaping the future of the Postal Service.

The animosity toward unions fuels much of what's going on with the Postal Service today. The leadership of the Postal Service wants to get rid of the no-layoff clause in union contracts so that it can cut hundreds of thousands of jobs. In a USPS white paper released last summer, the Postal Service stated explicitly that it wanted to reduce the career workforce from 580,000 to 300,000, and since there was no way that could happen through "attrition," postal management wants Congress to change the law preventing layoffs. The Postal Service also wants to increase the number of non-career employees from 38,000 to 125,000 — yet another way to undermine the unions. The leaders of the Postal Service aren't trying to reduce their labor costs just to deal with the postal deficit or to keep the big mailers

try. The Postal Service now contracts out \$12 billion annually.

At the top of the list of corporations enjoying a profitable relationship with the Postal Service — with \$1.37 billion of business in 2010 — is FedEx, whose founder and CEO, Fred Smith, testified before Congress that "closing down the USPS . . . is an option that ought to be considered seriously." FedEx has also campaigned against legislation that would make it easier for its workers to unionize.

Workshare arrangements with pre-sort companies (such as Pitney-Bowes) are another way to give work to private companies that could be done by postal workers. The huge discounts that these companies are given are often far in excess of what the Postal Service saves by receiving mail pre-sorted, and they end up costing the Postal Service huge amounts of money. The postal unions have been fighting these discounts for a long time, but to little avail. They are a valuable tool for downsizing the Postal Service, and they help move things further down the path to privatization. (For more on presort companies, see the excellent thesis **Understanding**





by Jason  
Rushing,  
Maintenance  
Craft Director

## Maintenance Craft Report

# — Sink Or Swim? —

2010-2012 has been pretty rough for Maintenance Craft employees. The idea that Maintenance employees had a Teflon coating wore off long ago. Since taking the Maintenance Craft Director's office in 2010, we have pretty much been neck deep in excessing, impacts, amps or some form of reduction or consolidation process. Currently we are still going through the same thing on one level or another. My goal was to educate and help employees through the Postal Service's process as much as I could with my limited powers. Knowledge

is power and I am always willing to share what I have.

Hopefully all Maintenance employees took advantage of the open season this year and put in for all available tests in their facilities. Whether it was a BC5 or an ET test, good luck!

The Postal Service has big changes on their minds, or not? Whatever happens or whatever decisions are made by the time you read this, you as a Maintenance employee have a job somewhere. That unfortunately has been a reality for far too many employees. They have had to travel further to a different work location, state or a different craft or occupational group. None the less, with the same pay and a guaranteed

amount of work hours if involuntarily excessed. The whole thing is just horrific if you are an impacted employee, but just imagine if we had no contract, had no protection, had no Union? Who would stand up for us? How about.... no one. You would have to beg, borrow or steal just to try and feed your family like millions of others are doing today. I am thankful for my Union and my job, lets make it the best we can!

Along with the new language in the contract, Maintenance will have quite a few additional jobs. The 1500 Custodial jobs should be named or named shortly after reading this. The ET arbitration we won a while back will have some specifics in the near future claiming some new

jobs also. The language for combining contracted Custodial jobs in the stations and branches will help larger facilities they are attached to, to gain additional employees and union members.

As always I say if training comes your way and you have years to go until retirement, consider taking it if available. If they offer local training, take that too. It is good to stay as up to date with training as you can. That is, if they continue to give it. How can a business that says they want to succeed NOT train their most valuable asset? **EMPLOYEES THAT DO THE DAILY WORK! US!**

As always thank you for allowing me to serve YOU, the member.



by Larry  
Moyer,  
Area 1  
Director

## Area 1 Director

# — Excessing —

Approximately one month ago I attended an excessing meeting that is required by the provisions of Article 12 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. This meeting was also attended by other union representatives of the other locals who represent APWU represented employees within the Detroit District. Also attending for the union was our APWU Central Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone and National Business Agent Lynn Pallas Barber. The individual for management who had prepared the excessing documents for my office of Troy, had a "drop down" menu button for the Brightmoor station of the Detroit post office. When I challenged this manager, she stated that it was a "computer clinch". To which I responded "How can any of the figures be valid for this office or any other other offices?"

Sharon Stone then turned to the management Area Complement Coordinator Nicole Collins Early and agreed with my position.

All and all, I was not impressed with the Detroit District management. Approximately 50 clerks in 20 offices were identified for excessing, of these, none of the clerks were going to be excessed based on the information shared with the APWU. The old Southeast Michigan District management at least had their "act" together better. We are talking about telling an employee that there is not enough work available in their present office and would need to be excessed elsewhere. The problem is that per Article 12 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement there is supposed to be at least 50 residual vacancies for these identified clerks to be excessing into. I

asked Area Complement Coordinator Nicole Collins Early if indeed there are at least 50 residual vacancies for clerks to go into. Her response was "No". Why then is management even considering excessing? In my humble opinion, this a **psychological mind game** that is being played on these clerks.

Management is telling these clerks "We do not have enough work in your office, but we have nowhere to place you". But yet I am aware of routine work that is delayed on a daily basis in associate office mail processing operations, and look at the excessively long lines at the retail units of larger offices and tell me we do not have enough work for clerks?

Management is attempting to take a "square peg" and fit it into a "round hole". No matter how hard you try it will not work other than changing the size the hole.

In other words, Management has gotten its "marching orders" from PMG Donahoe and company, and we (management) like good Nazi foot soldiers will implement what we are told to do!

For now, the excessing is on hold and will be revisited. Thank god for the provisions of Article 12 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. If the provisions did not call for a joint meeting, these "managers" would be implementing excessing without a thought of whether it is correct or rational.

**Proposed Closure of Processing Plants** – It is heartening that US Senator Carl Levin is questioning the need of the US Postal Service proposing the closing of the processing plants in Michigan. I would believe other US Senators and Representatives are questioning the need to close other plants in other states. It would be a travesty to have this plan to go forward as proposed by PMG Donahoe.

We have in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement a limit of excessing to 40 or at most 50 miles. Where are these plant employees going to be reassigned to?

But the parties can meet at the headquarters level, **"If in unusual situations there are insufficient residual vacancies available for placement within fifty (50) miles, the parties will determine what steps may be taken."**

My read of this language is that our National Officers could agree to have excessing in excess of the 50 mile limit, as there will not be available job within 50 miles. Did you notice how the US Postal Service is "promoting" APWU represented employees to become letter carriers? Are you aware that in the proposed **2013 FEDERAL budget** five day delivery is part of the budget?

Theoretically, an APWU represented employee could "Volunteer" to become a letter carrier and go to the bottom of the carrier seniority roster and potentially be **LAID OFF when per the proposed 2013 FEDERAL budget eliminate 6 day delivery of mail!**

My advice to all APWU represented employees stay where you are and force management to excess you. Do not volunteer and possible lose contractual protections!

Why isn't the union at the National level proposing the payment of **Severance Pay** for a reduction in force per Article 6 and Part 435 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual.

**Non-Traditional Full Time (NTFT's)** – I received a phone call from a clerk I formerly represented as a member at large. She took advantage of the opportunity to transfer to a large office (Level 21 office) nearby to become a FTR Regular. Now that she is a full time

regular she is being told that two **NTFT** bids are being created in her office. She felt that her local union was not doing anything to prevent this. My response to here that unfortunately this contract was ratified by the membership and unfortunately management has the right to create these positions.

How do you tell a FTR clerk getting 40 hours a week they could work as little as 30 hours a week? Or as much as 48 hours a week? My view is that the 40 hour work week has been a "standard" for full time workers since the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 passed, which established the five-day, 40-hour work week for everyone, a standard we observe today. How then can our Collective Bargaining Agreement change this?

Two years ago, our old Southeast Michigan District management unilaterally reduced the window hours in the smaller Associate offices. I had a meeting with the clerks in my area and recommended that they apply for "underemployment" with the Michigan Unemployment Agency. Unlike the private sector in which the employees pays into the unemployment fund per their payroll cycle (every two weeks, or monthly) the US Postal Service only pays into the unemployment fund only when acclaim by an employee is filed. Some of the clerks applied for "underemployment" benefits and the US Postal Service **DID NOT CHALLENGE the claim.**

Likewise if you end up in a **Non-Traditional Full Time bid assignment and work less than 40 hours in a week** apply for "underemployment" with the Michigan Unemployment Agency, based upon the fact that "traditionally" full time has been 40 hours! Will you win? I do not know, but if every NTFT clerk

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by Joanna Atkinson,  
Area 5  
Director

## Area 5 Director

# Have You Contacted Your Congressperson?

Some of the strangest things have been going on in the Postal Service. I've seen odd things before but this one takes the cake, no wait a minute, it takes the pizza. As many of you know the outgoing prime mail from Saginaw and the small associate offices in the 486-487 area has been sent to the Metroplex to be processed. Well, in Saginaw management decided a "party"

was in order so pizza and pop was brought in for the Tour 3 employees to "celebrate" the mail leaving. Sheets were also passed out for any postal memories that employees wanted to share! Honestly, that is the truth. Now don't get me wrong, I enjoy a party when it's warranted, but to celebrate OUR mail leaving . . . come on!!!

Have you contacted your senator or congressperson on any of the proposed bills that will be dealing with us, the USPS? Now is the time to act! Don't

be a bystander now and then whine when bills are passed that directly affect you. Go to the APWU national web site and check out the latest changes. The site is very user friendly, even I can get there without problems and most of you know computers are not my favorite things. The web site is APWU.org. Do it today, it may be too late tomorrow.

Just a reminder to all clerks or custodians in the 486-487 area. If you need to get a hold of me my phone number is

989-295-5454. I am still on midnights, but I normally am up by 1:30 p.m., so leave a message and I will call you back. You can also call me at work from 10:30 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. and that number is 989-771-5718.

Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions. I know the postmasters out there are doing whatever they can to cut your working hours, but if you don't call and let me know what is going on I won't know. So give me a call. Until next time . . .

# The Postal Service Has Gone Rogue

continued from page 4

Additionally mailing house were given discounts for "work sharing" that were in excess of the costs of postal workers doing this work (corporate welfare). The billions of dollars in lost revenue from bulk mail and increased costs from mail worked by mailing houses were billed to the American public in form of excessive first class stamp increases. This created an unauthorized stamp tax to support the mailing industry.

These actions by postal executives were not only repugnant they were clearly against regulations, shortsighted and dangerous. In the blind pursuit of an increased pay and benefit package for himself and his management team the Postmaster General sold Congress on PAEA in 2006 as a solution to the management created revenue shortage. This shortage was caused by lowering first class mail volume and rising bulk mail volumes artificially stimulated by huge discounts. If bulk mail paid for its cost of sortation and delivery as is

required there would not have been or currently be a revenue problem. If not for postal management's careless disregard of the rules and regulations the USPS created by Congress would be on solid financial footing.

In response to the inevitable crushing self-induced cash shortage caused by PAEA the USPS blatantly closed rural post offices listing only a lack of revenue as the reason, a clear violation of the law. In communities where post offices were left open they lowered service by removing thousands of collection boxes, moved up collection times well before the end of the business work day and reduced the hours of operation opening after and closing before the end of the business work day. Postal management viewed these actions in a vacuum and did not account for the lost revenue as they forced postal patrons to use our competition. In its insistence to continue the cooperate welfare for the bulk mailing industry and private mailing houses postal executives cannibalized the finest postal service in the

world.

USPS management unilaterally entered into an exclusive contract with FEDEX for air transport of US mail, subsidizing a major competitor and paying untold millions in unnecessary fees and penalties. Eager to repeat the disaster of excessive discounts to bulk mailers postal management entered into the "last mile" agreement with UPS. UPS performs the less costly highly profitable transporting of its packages from source to the nearest mail processing facility where the USPS is obligated to deliver this package to any remote address for \$1.05. Postal executives are using the same shortsighted flawed logic of having first class mail subsidize the sortation and delivery of another class of mail that ruined postal finances. Doubly damaging is that this agreement allows UPS to operate extremely profitably in large areas of the country where previously the USPS had a significant competitive advantage. So instead of receiving the whole 12, 15 or more dollars for deliv-

ering a package to rural America the USPS revives \$1.05 while performing this expensive task.

There has been a growth sector under the current leadership of postal executives unfortunately it is in executive and management positions. Even though hundreds of thousands of bargaining unit jobs have been trimmed from the rolls the number of headquarters management jobs actually grew. The most recent numbers available show 1 member of management for every 6 workers, a ridiculous ratio. When you factor in the contract and "temporary" management the ratio becomes obscene. The self-centered arrogance necessary to increase management and pay themselves bonuses while driving the postal service into insolvency is astounding. The American public and workers are the only ones making concessions.

Now the latest scheme by postal executives is "Network Realignment". If this plan is adopted a drastic slow down of the mail will result driving away business with its revenues and the closing of thousands of small town an city neighborhood post offices. The postal service claimed it would save over 3 billion dollars a year when it announced this plan to the public. The studies have just been released and as the Office of Inspector General (OIG) had determined with previous postal Area Mail Processing (AMP) studies claimed savings simply cannot be justified. Moving mail from more to less efficient facilities claiming work hour savings goes against all available data. As does transporting mail longer distances both to and from for processing will result in a savings in transportation. The studies are clearly flawed and were performed with a designed outcome in mind. Postal executives have transformed pounding the square peg in the round hole into an art form.

Examining the AMP studies as written with all the inflated claims of savings the latest total savings for network consolidation down to around 800 mil-

continued on page 10



by Gary Van Hoogstraten  
MPWU  
Advisor

## MPWU Advisor

# The Postal Service Is Self-Supportive

I know most of you have been asked the same questions at some time. What is going on with the Postal Service? Then they all say they don't care if it goes down to 5 day delivery week. They ask how much of the internet and computer has hurt the Postal Service? I can tell you I do not do any banking online and I never will. I pay all my bills the old way, I mail them. I hope all of you are the same and if not, shame on you. One of the things that people do not realize is that the Postal Service is self-supportive. They think we get money from the Federal Government, WRONG. I recently read an article

written by the President of the NALC in Saginaw. He did an excellent job in putting it in writing so the average citizen can understand what's going on. I believe it all falls back on the bill that President Bush signed in 2006. This law requires the Postal Service to pre-fund future retiree health benefits 75 years into the future within a 10 year period. Here we are pre-funding for people that are not even born yet. This bill cost the USPS 5.5 billion annually. You do the math at 5.5 billion from 2006 to 2012 and don't you think this money would have made the Postal Service solvent? The Postal Service

also overfunded two (2) separate retiree accounts to the tune of 6.9 billion dollars. This money belongs to the USPS and should be used to pay off their debt.

I know many of you think I am beating a dead horse, but just look at the facts. I can't tell you how important it is for you to get a hold of your legislators and ask them to help save the Postal Service without cutting services you so deserve. They are already closing plants with more to come. Go a step further and get a letter out for the average citizen to sign and send it in. Your job and future retirement depends on things that you need to do. Until Next Time.





by John Smeekeens, Veterans Director

# Veteran's Report

## Need Help Now

The following is an e-mail from Ms. Marty Eddy, President of the POW/MIA Committee of Michigan. She, and the committee, need our HELP NOW!

*"It has come to my attention that a Wisconsin-based group, Veterans for Weed (VFW), is grossly misusing the POW/MIA logo to advocate for the legalization of marijuana. The marijuana legalization issue is subject to intense ongoing debate, but distorting the internationally recognized POW/MIA logo is disgraceful, and trivializes the POW/MIA issue. It's a slap in the face to former POWs, those still missing and unaccounted for, and their families. I have reported this travesty to the National League of POW/MIA Families. The League has contacted the VFW national office as well, since Veterans for Weed is using VFW as their organization acronym. Veterans for Weed has a website, [www.theveteransforweed.com](http://www.theveteransforweed.com). The group has a Facebook page, too. I respectfully ask that you consider contacting this so-called veterans group and ask them to stop using the POW/MIA logo for their cause. Additionally, please share this information and request with others.*

*Thank you for your attention to this matter."*

Marty Eddy  
President, POW Committee of Michigan  
MI State Coordinator, National League of POW/MIA Families

So as of this writing they have changed their name to VFWU, Veterans For Weed United. But they still say they have the right to use the POW/MIA Logo to support their efforts. Go to their web site and you can read all about it. Their "contact us" for their web site isn't working as of this writing, but here's their mailing address to send them a nice little letter, or a Post Card, asking them to please STOP using the POW/MIA logo for their group; VFWU/POW, P.O. Box 342393, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53234. DO IT TODAY!!! Thank You!!!

### MORE BLUE WATER SHIPS

The VA has added 47 vessels to its list of Navy and Coast Guard ships whose crews may have been exposed to the defoliant Agent Orange. Former service members who served aboard these "blue water" ships as well as the more than 200 others listed in VA's database from 1962 to 1975 may be eligible for disability compensation. According to The Military Times, vessels recently added to the roster include the hospital ship Repose, which operated in

close coastal waters from 1966 to 1970, and the transport ship General R.M. Blatchford, which landed elements of the 1st Infantry Division at Vung Tau in October 1965. Read more at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/index.asp>.

### KOREA MIA RECOVERY IS BACK

After a seven year-absence due to security concerns, Joint POW/MIA Action Accounting Command teams will be heading back into North Korea this spring to search for the remains of missing Americans from the Korean War. The teams are scheduled to work in two areas: Unsan County, about 60 miles north of Pyongyang; and near the Chosin/Jangjin Reservoir, where more than 2,000 soldiers and Marines are believed to be missing. Of approximately 83,000 Americans missing since World War II, almost 8,000 are from the Korean War--with about 5,500 of them believed to be in North Korea.

### WHY SEE A VETERANS REPRESENTATIVE

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has amended existing regulations, to reflect a new statutory authority to extend eligibility for burial in a national cemetery to include parents of certain veterans, as authorized by the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010 (the Act), enacted on October 13, 2010. The Act authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to inter the biological or legally adoptive parents of a deceased veteran if the deceased veteran is a hostile casualty or dies from a training-related injury, is interred in a VA national cemetery in a gravesite with available space, and has no spouse or child who is buried, or surviving spouse or child who, upon death, may be eligible for burial, in a national cemetery. Effective Date: January 31, 2012.

### DISABLED VETERANS HOME LOANS

If you're a disabled vet, you may qualify for exclusive benefits associated with the **VA Home Loan Guaranty Program**. Federally-backed mortgage benefits help eligible military members finance their homes. Additionally, many disabled vets may qualify for grants from the VA to adapt their homes to their specific disabilities. Most vets with disabilities caused by injuries sustained in service will likely be eligible for a VA loan. Disabled vets often do not need to meet the minimum required service days for war or peacetime on active duty. They would still need to qualify with credit and income

to receive a VA loan. Disabled veterans receive all the benefits VA home loans have to offer with a few advantages. All VA-eligible borrowers can expect, *as little as zero percent down payment, no private mortgage insurance, competitive interest rates, no pre-payment penalties. Additionally, disabled veterans can also expect, exemption from the VA funding fee, grants for special accessibility modifications.* Vets who receive monthly service-connected disability compensation are exempt from the VA funding fee which can run from .5 to 3.3 percent for everyone else. Only surviving spouses join disabled vets in this exemption. Fee-free mortgages may provide financing for the purchase of a home. But, what if the home is not disability accessible? Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grants are available through the VA to help disabled veterans pay for mobility modifications that can make their homes more accessible. SAH grants can be made for no more than 50 percent of the total cost of a specially-adapted home, up to the aggregate maximum of \$63,780. The law allows for the SAH grant benefits to be used up to three times by each eligible veteran to accommodate for annual increases in the total maximum. Some restrictions apply, like VA loans require owner occupancy, and SAH grants require ownership and title of home. For more on VA home loan benefits for disabled vets, get in touch with an experienced mortgage professional.

### VA EXPANDS MOBILE VET CENTERS

The VA announced that an additional 20 Mobile Vet Centers will be on the road to help increase counseling service access to veterans and their families residing in rural or underserved communities. Almost 200,000 veterans and their families made more than 1.3 million visits to a VA Vet Center in FY 2011. For more information contact the VA online at [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov).

The new mobile Vet Centers will be based at; Birmingham, AL; San Diego, CA; Atlanta, GA; Western Oahu, HI; Cedar Rapids, IA; Evanston, IL; Indianapolis, IN; Baltimore, MD; Pontiac, MI; Kansas City, MO; Green Bay, WI; Washington County, UT; Nashville, TN; Ponce, Puerto Rico; Lawton, OK; Stark County, OH; Reno, NV; Lakewood, N.J.; Greensboro, N.C.; Jackson, MS. These customized, RV sized vehicles, will be able to travel to communities to extend the VA's reach to Veterans and their families. Each one is equipped with confidential counseling space and state-of-the-art

communications packages.

### HOMELESS VETERANS

If you know of a homeless Veteran, who needs assistance, please have them call 877-424-3838, to speak to a counselor. There are numerous benefits and grants available to help families in need. The funding is specifically set aside to help eligible wartime Veterans. By contacting a County Veterans Affairs Office, or a Veterans Service Organization VSO, they can receive an application for these benefits. For more information, contact the State Veterans Affairs Directorate at 517-335-6523 or via e-mail at [dmvawebmaster@michigan.gov](mailto:dmvawebmaster@michigan.gov).

### SESAME STREET CONNECTS

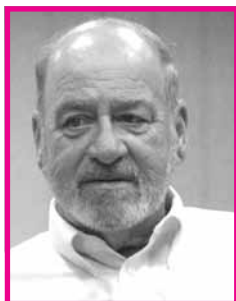
Through a partnership with the Department of Defense and Military OneSource, the Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street, wants to help parents and children communicate with a program called "Talk, Listen, Connect," a bilingual educational outreach initiative designed for military families and their young children to share. Resources are available for parents consist of a bilingual (English/Spanish) multimedia kit with DVDs starring Muppets from Sesame Street, print materials and American Greeting postcards featuring Sesame Street characters for parents and their children to stay connected. The kit materials are available free online, or on the **Military Families Near and Far** website.

### MEMORIAL DAY

Don't forget that Monday May 28, 2012, is Memorial Day. This is the day we set aside to honor and remember our Veterans' who have made the Ultimate Sacrifice. Please take a moment to bow your head in honored silence for these heroes. They have kept this country free, and have given us the ultimate freedom to pursue the lifestyles and choices that we have chosen. I know it's the start of summer, with thoughts of your upcoming vacations, BBQ's, family reunions, graduations, baseball games, picnics, and even our own State Convention. But don't forget that these freedoms were all earned with blood, sweat, and tears. So make time, to take a minute with your family, with your friends, or by yourself, to bow your head in honored reverence, respect, and silence and say a prayer for those special Men & Women who have made the Ultimate Sacrifice for all of us. It will only take a minute.

Have a great, happy , and safe Memorial Day.





by Al  
LaBrecque,  
Retiree's Chapter  
President

## Retiree Involvement Privatization

“PRIVATIZATION: The practice of transferring government property, enterprises and services to private ownership. ....Legalized looting of public assets. The spoils that go to the winners of elections. The final step in the rip-off of the public purse.” (Ernest DeMaio, Words For Workers in Changing Times, 1993)

Is anyone reading this so naive as to believe that the incredible struggle we're engaged in isn't about privatization of the U.S. Postal Service? That's exactly what I told my 1st District Congressman Benishek's (R) legislative aide the day before this is being written.

“Dr.” Benishek, a first-term GOP Tea Party bozo, who replaced our great friend Bart Stupak who retired, has steadfastly refused to support H.R. 1351 despite constant pressure from MPWU President John Marcotte, APWU PPA President, Tony Carobine, I would guess from Traverse City, Gaylord, and Iron Mountain Locals, Alpena Thunder Bay NARFE Chapter #1487, the Alcona County Dem Committee, and yours truly, all of whom live in the 1st Congressional District. After enjoying the representation of Rep. Stupak, this has been a real culture shock. I will say, however, we finally seem to have Benishek and his staff's attention given now that they are e-mailing and calling in response to our issues.

His Gaylord District office aide tried to salve me regarding the mass rural post office closures by telling me that it's not necessarily a “done deal”. That mass closures at the end of the May 15th moratorium may not necessarily happen that way, and for those that must close, village post offices would be established to provide postal services. WELL...that ended the nicey-nice. Village P.O.'s be damned! Postage sold from roadside fruit stands?! The gloves came off by informing him that he wasn't B.S.ing someone in the backwoods who didn't know any better. In rapid sequence he was informed that some minimum waged gas pump employee selling beer and jerky to fishermen would not be providing the same full range of postal services as a postal worker. That postal employees have to pass an entrance exam, undergo a background check, submit to a pee cup test, able to lift a 70 lb. pouch, fully trained on the Postal Manual and retail services, maintain accountability, not to mention uphold the sanctity of the U.S. mails. So, don't tell me about ‘village post offices’!!

Now, I know our APWU Legislative Dept. would disapprove of the gloves off approach. Be polite. Don't

*continued on page 13*

threaten. Be respectful, etc.. The soft-soap approach doesn't work with guys like this Congressman or his staff. They just blow you off. So, what's to lose?

In signing off after a lot more stats and facts from the APWU viewpoint, I assured the staffer that I fully intended to keep postal customers here, who are

by the way, VOTERS, apprised as to what their Congressman is doing or not doing to preserve their postal service, reminding him that it IS an election year

### 2012 Michigan State Retiree Chapter 6th Biennial Constitutional Convention

Friday, June 1, 2012

Park Place Hotel • Traverse City, Michigan

#### MPWU STATE RETIREE CHAPTER CONVENTION CALL

The 6th 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 will receive Per Diem for meals, incidentals, and gratuities.

**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 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 Chapter officers will be the last order of business prior to lunch recess on Friday, June 1st. 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](mailto: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 Traverse City when registering. Return the Blue Card at once to: MPWU Sec.-Treas., Darren Joyce; P.O. Box 1124; Flint, MI 48501, no later than April 15th.

**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.-Secretary by April 15, 2012. Final submission of any 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.



by Linda  
Turney  
National  
Business Agent

## Turney Talks

# Relief And Pool

One of the most misunderstood bids in the Postal Service is the Relief and Pool. These assignments have been changed in our new contrast to cover vacancies and absences of employees holding regular bid assignments. These types of bids may give the successful bidder some uncertainty with regard to their scheduling.

The Postal Service may establish new Relief and Pool assignments in any installation. If your Post Office did not have Relief and Pool, management must discuss these jobs with the Union prior establishing Relief and Pool. The type and location of the assignment to be relieved must be specific. For example, the bid must cover absences of window in the West side Station.

The Relief and Pool can also be as-

signed to other installations to relieve a Postmaster, Supervisor or their replacement. The degree of specificity may vary with the size of the area.

These types of assignments can have different hours of duty and may vary from day to day. An employee holding a bid with different hours of duty will be paid overtime for hours worked outside his/her normal schedule.

When the Relief and Pool clerk is notified on the Wednesday of the preceding service week of an assignment to cover the absence/vacancy of the area established by the bid for a period of 5 working days or longer, the employee will take the new schedule and NOT receive overtime pay for those hours worked in the new schedule.

The Relief and Pool clerk will be entitled to overtime pay for those hours worked outside of the normal schedule

unless and until management informs him/her **in writing** that he/she is to work a new schedule for a week or longer, or if he/she works the new schedule for **less than a week** after he/she is so informed by management, or if he/she works in an area that is not included in the specific type and location on the bid assignment to be relieved as mentioned above.

In a case decided by Arbitrator Linda Dileone Klein, she addresses relief and pool employees who are utilized to cover absences and other situations where assignments are uncovered. The MOU refers to a "degree of uncertainty" in the Relief and Pool assignment and it sets forth various principles to apply in order to minimize "uncertainties". The nature of the assignment must state the type and location of the assignments to be relieved. If management does not list the type or station the Relief and Pool

clerk could be paid out of schedule. The "degree of specificity" in the assignment could under certain conditions be limited.

We can also argue that management may not combine two relief assignments to meet the five (5) day requirement. The five day or more provision of the Agreement relates to assuming an assignment for the full period, not combinations of different assignments of different employees. Short term absences which are less than five working days are to be covered by creating and scheduling the appropriate number and variety of pool assignments to meet such foreseeable requirements. There is nothing in the agreement that would prevent management from assigning a Relief and Pool clerk to work 12 consecutive days as long as it is 5 days or longer.

# The Postal Service Has Gone Rogue

*continued from page 7*

lion dollars. When you subtract the 500 million dollars the USPS claims will be lost revenue due to reductions in service the savings amount to 300 million dollars. This amount could easily be a net loss if the projected loss of revenue is larger than the USPS has estimated. Replace the inflated AMP studies savings projections with realistic numbers and the American public will PAY MONEY to close post offices and slow down the mail. USPS management is trying to get history to repeat itself. As

with PAEA in 2006 they are attempting to ram through changes they desire to the postal service in response to a self induced "crisis" without giving Congress time to examine the issues in-depth and obtain concrete data.

Does the postal service need to adjust its business model to serve the American people? Yes. Is Network Realignment the way? No. Postal Executives refuse to pick the low hanging fruit when it comes to balancing the books. Stop paying private mailing houses for work that the postal service can perform cheaper.

Adjust the management to worker ratio to a ratio common in the public sector, 20 to 1. The internet has eliminated the need for district offices. Close them all and run the postal service from headquarters and area offices where all the data is sent anyway. Develop a 5-year plan that ends with bulk advertising mail paying its fair share of its processing and delivery cost. End the "last mile" contract with UPS and the exclusive contract with FEDEX to fly the mail. Let FEDEX compete with other air carriers and let the USPS compete straight

up with UPS in rural America. Tighten requirements so only mail that reads and sorts without jamming at a high percentage receives any postage discount ending the practice of giving discounts for mail that requires additional handling. Make career postal employees ineligible from holding the position of Postmaster General. Adopt the above recommendations and BILLIONS of dollars in actual savings would be realized without sacrificing any service or closing a single post office. The financial situation at the USPS can be easily fixed with common sense leadership interested in serving the American people and not themselves. Without congressional action the postal service will enter into a death spiral it will never be able to pull out of.

Contact your Senators and your Congressman and tell them to pass laws to stop the dismantling of the postal service now. Insist that Congress with local community leaders be able to examine accurate verified data well before any post office or processing center is to be closed. Urge them to enact laws that require the USPS to serve the American people universally continuing overnight service for all of America and limit the power and authority of the career postal insiders who have forgotten they are public servants. The destruction of the postal service with the end result being an enormous government bailout is inevitable unless Congress stops this insanity now. Congress has one chance to get it right and restore the USPS to the best, most affordable postal system in the world, make sure they get it done and get it done now. Write, call or email today.

## Save The Post Office

*continued from page 5*

**50 billions pieces**, there were around **43,000 post offices** (including contract postal units). Today the U.S. has over 300 million people, first-class mail volumes are about 78 billion pieces, and there are around 35,000 post offices. While population and mail volumes have increased by more than 50%, the number of post offices has declined by almost 20%. Yet somehow we are expected to believe that there are too many post offices.

The leaders of the Postal Service are committed to dismantling what they call — with considerable disdain — the "legacy" of "brick-and-mortar" post offices. Headquarters doesn't like the way people get attached to their post office, or the way the workers in the post office give a face to the postal system and the government. The bonding to a place and the human connection make people care too much about what happens with the postal system as a whole, and

that just gets in the way of what postal leaders are trying to do. These post offices are a proud reminder of the great things our government and our postal system can do. These are indeed icons, symbolic of everything the conservative anti-government businessmen have been crusading against since the New Deal. Closing these post offices and selling them to private businesses, to be turned into real estate offices and restaurants and clothing stores, is yet another mode of privatization and sad proof that the

attack on the New Deal continues to this day.

The whole thing is sad, really. **Depriving workers of a decent salary and job security and the promise of a secure retirement**, treating communities as so insignificant they don't even deserve a post office, transferring historic public buildings to private hands for private profits, **putting the interests of the wealthy corporate elite above those of the country as a whole — it's more than sad, it's a crime.**

## — Excessing —

*continued from page 6*

in the country challenged this with their state Unemployment Agency, and the US Postal Service received a bill, I believe the NTFT bids would be seriously reduced through the country! Just because the NTFT position exists

in our contract does not mean it cannot go unchallenged! Maybe not in the grievance procedure (unless the NTFT language is not followed), but in other forums such as with the state Unemployment Agency.

Until next time; Solidarity.





by Lynn  
Pallas-Barber,  
National  
Business Agent

Well it appears that way. Management of the USPS is hell bent on tearing down the AMP network. They are calling it Area Mail Processing Network Optimization. That means consolidation of their mail processing facilities. It also means reducing the delivery standards. Management maintains that they need no approval from anyone as they made up the rules and they now have the right to change the rules. Congress needs to take some immediate action. USPS management is going to honor the moratorium that they agreed to with Congress until May 15, 2012. That date is fast approaching and USPS management is on a fast moving freight train. On March 1, 2012 we met on the first AMP Impact Statements in the State of Illinois. Sharyn Stone, Central Region Coordinator and I meet with the Great Lakes Area. The discussions were held with the Central IL District and the Gateway District. The first discussion was with the Central IL District. The plants involved in this meeting were Fox Valley and Bloomington, IL. The plan intends to move the originating mail and destinating mail from Bloomington to Peoria and Champaign, IL. The impact statement identified 59 FTR Level 6 Clerks. The Fox Valley impact statement identified the destinating mail moving to South Suburban and 143FTR impacted Level 6 clerks. We took the position that both impact statements were improper. As both facilities have Level 6 and Level 7 and BQ employees management failed to look at the entire picture. They also failed to provide the Post Excessing Profile which would provide us the number of jobs which should remain in the facility. The corrected information was supposed to be supplied the following week. As I write this article we have not been given that information yet.

That afternoon on March 1, 2012 we met with the Gateway District and the Great Lakes Area on AMP studies in Quincy, Springfield, Centralia, Carbon-dale, and Effingham. The originating and destinating mail from Quincy will be moved to Columbia, MO and 41 FTR Level 6 clerks will be impacted. In Springfield IL the originating and destinating mail will be moved to the St, Louis, MO NDC and PDC. That impact statement identified 91 FTR Level 6 clerks. Carbon-dale which is the southernmost P&DF in IL has 43 Level 6 FTR impacted clerks. That originating and destinating mail will be moved to Evansville, IN. The originating and destinating mail from Centralia, IL will also be moved to Evansville, IN. This statement identified 34 impacted FTR level 6 clerks. In Effingham the originating and destinating mail will be moved to Champaign, IL. Management has identified 32 FTR Level 6 impacted clerks.

Once again the impact statements did not properly identify the Level 7 and BQ positions that may be impacted as well. They failed to provide the Post Excessing Profile and could not explain what positions would remain after the excessing. Once again we were promised the updated information and that has not yet provided. Management is also going on the workroom floor and holding town hall meetings with employees. Our Clerk Craft employees have to remember not to panic. Management's facts and figures are unreliable.

The impact statements for Michigan have not been received as of today. Management has proposed impact statements for Lansing, Gaylord and Iron Mountain. A telecom has now been scheduled for March 30. It remains unknown to see if the Greater Michigan District can do any better.

We must keep the faith and stay politically vigilant!!

#### ELECTED OFFICIALS PUT THE PRESSURE ON

Postal management has agreed to a temporary halt on plant closings. Pressure from certain elected officials prompted this action based on the election this fall. More than likely this will not affect anything they have already planned to move on. Absentee mail-in ballots are used frequently and there is a fear that these ballots could be lost or delayed in the shuffle. Officials from Arizona, California, Ohio and Oregon raised the concerns.

Voting by mail has become popular in the States of Oregon and Washington. One in five voters cast their ballots by mail, according to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. It is anticipated that number will increase in the next election



by Michael  
O'Hearn,  
National  
Business Agent

The new contract has important new language in Article 37, the Clerk Craft Article. It is in Section 3, titled Posting, Bidding, and Application. Under Article 37 Section 3. A.1, it states "Every effort will be made to create desirable duty assignments from all available work hours for career employees to bid." This language is unprecedented in our contract. This is a completely new concept that has many implications for our members. In previous contracts, there was no language that required management to consider anything except the needs of the service.

## NBA Report

# Are They Crazy?

APRIL 28

Each April 28, since 1989, unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day. This is a day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job. April 28 was chosen because it is the anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of similar remembrance in Canada. Every year, employees in hundreds of communities and worksites recognize workers who have been killed or injured on the job. Trade unionists around the world now recognize April 28 as an International Day of Mourning. As we remember those who have died in the workplace because of violence, suffered disease and death because of exposure to toxic substances or have been injured because of dangerous conditions, we should rededicate ourselves to the fight for a safe workplace.

#### PSE? OIC? 204B?

There have been a number of questions from the field concerning the use of PSEs as 204bs and OICs. PSEs are defined as noncareer employee bargaining unit employees. Once again management has found another reason to abuse the new CBA. They are now detailing PSEs as OICs and 204bs. The TACS system will not allow them to pay PSEs EAS pay. The PSEs detailed as 204bs are still being paid Level 6 PSE pay. AS they are being paid at the bargaining-unit rate, they must be performing bargaining unit work. We should take the position that they are being detailed per Article 25 as a Lead Clerk. Article 25 states that higher level details in the bargaining unit, the principle of preference should be given to career employees first. It also goes on to say that PSEs will not be assigned to LSSA, Bulk Mail Tech, Special Postal Clerk and Lead Clerk in Function 4, only except when no career employee is available.

Per USPS Publication 32 and OIC must be a career employee. PSEs are not career and should be detailed as an OIC. There are two (2) national disputes pending on the creation of a new Standard position Description created for a Level 4 PSE, Case #Q11C-4Q-C 11275747 & Q11C-4Q-C 11275789. Management unilaterally created this new description to be used in the Level 15 and 16 Post Offices. These PSE do not count toward the 20% cap per District. Grievances need to be filed on their hiring and the details as OIC.

As postal workers, we have seen violence take the lives of our co-workers. We have seen the death of fellow workers because of anthrax in the mail. We have seen hundreds of our members injured because of ergonomic strain on the workroom floor. The struggle continues for each and every one of us to be involved in safety on the workroom floor. Our membership is often reluctant to use a PS Form 1767. We all have an obligation to be safety conscious!!

Spring is in the air. Happy Easter and happy spring!!!

"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.

## NBA Report

# Desirable Duty Assignments

This new language brings in a whole new set of factors to be considered.

What is a desirable duty assignment? This may seem like a subjective term, but I believe we can all agree on certain factors that make a duty assignment more desirable. For example, Saturday and Sunday off is more desirable than Wednesday and Thursday off. Likewise, consecutive days off is better than split days off. I am sure for most members 40 hours a week is more desirable than 30 or 35 hours a week. Also, having at least two days off in a week as opposed to only one day off in a week is desirable. Some probably would like three days off in a week (a NTFT of 10

hours a days for four days in a week). A duty assignment on day shift instead of night shift is usually considered more desirable. A simple test would be to see if the job gets bid on by someone. Obviously, if no one bids the job, it is not a desirable duty assignment.

How can we apply this new language? Since this language is in the posting and bidding section, it would definitely apply to the posting of newly created jobs. If management is creating a bunch of awful jobs, you have language to challenge these postings. Our National Union has even put out a computer program to reconfigure man-

*continued on page 13*

# Senators Supporting Us With S.1789

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 14, 2012

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman, Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins, Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information,  
and International Security  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Scott P. Brow, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information,  
and International Security  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lieberman, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Collins, and Ranking Member Brown:

As you know, we have serious concerns with the United States Postal Service’s (USPS) plan to close thousands, of mostly rural post offices, eliminate hundreds of mail processing plants, slash its workforce by 220,000, and substantially slow down mail delivery. If this plan is implemented, it will have a devastating impact on rural America, small businesses, veterans, the elderly, and our entire economy.

Last December, many of us worked with the Postmaster General on a five-month moratorium to prevent the closure or consolidation of rural post offices and mail processing facilities. This moratorium, which lasts until May 15th, has given Congress some time to enact a comprehensive bill to allow USPS to succeed in the 21st Century, protect rural communities and preserve the prompt and reliable delivery of mail

Everyone understands that the Postal Service is in the midst of a serious financial crisis that must be addressed. But, we believe that this financial crisis can be solved in a way that does not substantially slow down the delivery of mail and harm rural America. Over the short-term, we believe that the Postal Service should be allowed to recover more than \$10 billion in overpayments it has made to its pension plans. Further, we believe that the Postal Service should not be required to pre-fund 75 years worth of future retiree health benefits over a 10 year period. Over the long-term, we believe that the Postal Service must develop a new business model for it to succeed in the 21st Century, just like virtually every other postal service in the industrialized world has already done.

We thank you for your leadership On this issue and the extraordinary amount of work you and your staff have devoted in reforming USPS. As a result of your efforts, legislation you introduced to reform USPS (S.1789) was placed on the Senate calendar on January 26,2012. Clearly, S.1789 is an improvement over the draconian cuts proposed by USPS.

We believe, however, that significant improvements can be made to S. 1789 before it reaches the floor and look forward to working with you to make that happen.

1. **Maintain 1-3 day delivery standards for first class mail.** As we move forward with reforms, we must prevent cuts to service standards that will allow for the closure of 252 area mail processing facilities. The Postal Service has already reduced its number of mail processing facilities from 675 to 508 over the last six years, and the Postmaster General has made clear that any additional reductions would result in a substantial decline in the reliable and expedient postal service that Americans have come to expect.

USPS cannot afford to disappoint its customers in this manner. It does not exist in a vacuum but rather competes for market share with private services that have the capacity to offer convenient and expedient delivery. If USPS becomes inconvenient and slow, many of its most loyal customers — from home delivery medication companies to newspaper publishers — will turn to private mailing options. Once those customers leave, they are most likely not coming back, and the Postal Service’s financial woes will continue to spiral.

Therefore, we would urge you to include manager’s amendment language to prohibit USPS from ending 1-3 day delivery standards for first class mail. We would support a four-year sunset on this provision to give USPS the time it needs to come up with a new business model.

2. **Protect Rural Post Offices.** We must prevent the closure of rural post offices. In many rural parts the country, post offices are often the heart and soul of their communities. As just two examples, many seniors in rural areas rely on the local post office for timely delivery of prescription medication, and many small businesses rely on the local post office for shipping their product. For centuries, USPS has provided a maximum degree of service to rural communities and, as current law provides; it is “the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal service be ensured to residents of both urban and rural communities.” The closures of thousands of mostly rural post offices currently being studied by USPS fly directly in the face of this universal service requirement as they would leave many residents to drive up to an hour to reach the nearest post office. It makes no economic sense to have hundreds of people spending hours driving back and forth multiple times to a distant post office rather than maintaining a local post office, potentially with reduced hours.

To protect rural post offices, S.1789 includes the Moran-Tester amendment. This is a good step forward, but we would go further. Specifically, we would ask that manager’s amendment language be included to strengthen this provision by ensuring that USPS is required to consider the lack of access to internet, broadband, and cell phone coverage before it can close down a post office. In addition, we believe that the Postal Regulatory Commission should have binding authority to prevent post offices from being closed in cases in which USPS did not follow the service standards of the Moran-Tester amendment. Finally, we would note that there is support for prohibiting the postal service from closing any post office which results in more than 10 miles distance (as measured on roads with year-round access) between any 2 post offices as a backstop to ensure our most isolated communities are not left without access.

3. **Maintain 6-day delivery of mail.** As you know, S.1789 prevents USPS from eliminating 6-day delivery for the next two years. After this two-year period, the Postal Service can eliminate 6-day delivery if the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has determined that all of its other cost-cutting and revenue options have been exhausted and it is the only way for the Postal Service to return to profitability. We believe that this is a good first step, but that it should be improved.

We would ask that manager’s amendment language include changing the two year ban on ending 6-day delivery to four years. Further, we would recommend that language be added to make it clear

that after this four year ban has ended, USPS could end 6-day delivery only if the GAO determines that this is the only viable option for the Postal Service to achieve long-term fiscal sustainability (rather than profitability).

4. **Establish a blue ribbon entrepreneurial commission to develop a new business model for the postal service to succeed in the 21st Century.** Finally, we would ask that manager’s amendment language be inserted to establish a blue ribbon commission to develop a new business model for the Postal Service to succeed in the 21st Century.


As you know, undercurrent law, USPS is prohibited from engaging in new non-postal business opportunities. This prohibition is putting the U.S. Postal Service at a severe financial disadvantage compared to many other post offices in the developed world.


One of the very positive provisions of S.1789 is that it allows USPS to contract with state and local governments to perform services such as issuing hunting and fishing licenses, copying, and notarizing. S.1789 also allows the postal service to ship wine and beer. Further, S.1789 would allow USPS to perform other new activities as long as they do not unfairly compete with the private sector.


We see this provision as a very positive step towards providing more flexibility that will allow USPS to generate new revenue. We think that concept, however, could be expanded. We would ask that manager’s amendment language be included to establish a blue-ribbon commission of entrepreneurs, innovators, postmasters, experts in the mailing industry, and labor to develop a report recommending a new business model for USPS to achieve long-term fiscal sustainability. This report should be completed within six months and USPS would have three years to implement this plan.

Thank you in advance for your consideration to our request. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

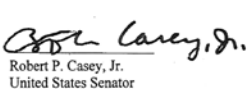
  
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator


  
Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator

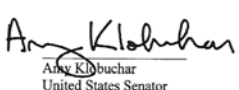
  
Jon Tester  
United States Senator


  
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator


  
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator


  
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

  
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator


  
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

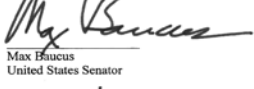
  
Ben Cardin  
United States Senator

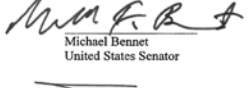
  
Mary Landrieu  
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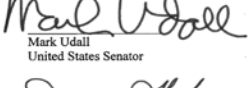
  
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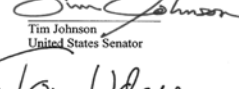
  
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United States Senator

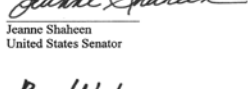
  
Ben Nelson  
United States Senator

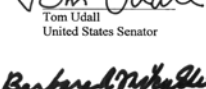
  
Max Baucus  
United States Senator

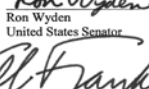
  
Michael Bennet  
United States Senator

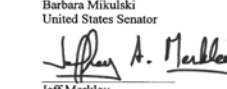
  
Mark Udall  
United States Senator

  
Tim Johnson  
United States Senator

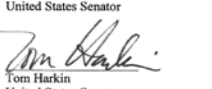
  
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

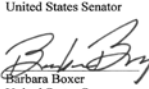
  
Tom Udall  
United States Senator


  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

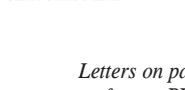
  
Barbara Mikulski  
United States Senator

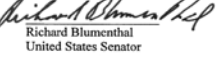
  
Al Franken  
United States Senator

  
Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Herb Kohl  
United States Senator

  
Tom Harkin  
United States Senator

  
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Letters on pages 1 and 10 have been reformatted from a PDF file for use in this publication.





# National Debt In Plain Words

*Editor's Note: I received this from one of my military organizations I belong to. However, I thought it was worth reprinting. It explains just how much of a mess we are really in. And now that the Supercommitte (for which my own Representative Camp was part of it, and couldn't do anything (like normal), this puts it more into light.*

From: Michael M. Dunn (Air Force Association President)

AFA Members, Congressional staff members, civic leaders, DOCA members, I received a very large response to my last note about cuts in the defense budget.

A sampling of your responses:

- The country is in big-time trouble
- We have to spend money on de-

fense to protect ourselves

- It's not right to make major cuts in our military – when they are overseas fighting for us

- We need to blame the (fill in the blank \_\_\_\_\_) Bush Administration/Obama Administration/Congress/ourselves

- The military should share in the hardships ahead

- Among other things we should raise taxes

However, I still believe most of us have not thought through what the debt numbers mean. Here's an example to help clarify the situation:

Let us suppose that the government could reduce the budget deficit to zero. This would mean cutting not just \$1.5

Trillion over ten years . . . but \$12 Trillion over the same time period.

And suppose we could pay \$100M per day . . . every day . . . to reduce our debt.

How long would it take to reduce it to zero? Answer: over **404 years**.

But wait . . . that assumes a zero interest rate. Presently 10 year treasury bills yield about 2%. If you assume that rate is constant over the next 400+ years, you will have to pay \$295B per year in interest over the first years . . . and since \$100M per day only produces \$36.5B annually, you can't get there. \$100M per day actually grows the debt over \$250B per year in the first years.

So, let's change the amount and say you could pay \$1B per day. That

produces \$365B per year and pays the interest of \$295B and a small reduction in the debt. But . . . average interest rate on 10 year treasuries over a long period of time is more like 5%. If you assume a 5% rate, you need \$738B per year in interest payments alone . . . and \$1B per day allows the debt to continue to grow \$370B+ per year in the first years.

Bottom line – given the size of our national debt, if interest rates ever get back to “normal,” it would take \$2.21B every day to reduce the debt to zero over 50 years. Remember, this assumes Congress and the Administration can first find \$12 Trillion in cuts to government spending to balance the budget over the next 10 years.

## — Privatization —

*continued from page 9*

and this is an issue that affects every household and business in his District. He thanked me for my views, of course. My venting may not have changed anything, but I sure felt better.

Going against everything we've been trained to do in dealing with elected Members of Congress, I submit that if you have a Congressperson who's proven to be no friend in representing our best interests; it's time to take off the gloves, switch tactics, and let them know where the bear dumped in the buckwheat! THEN . . . learn who the candidate(s) are in your Congressperson's District (and, the same can be applied in the case of an unfriendly Senator in your state). Meet with the candidates and present them with the issues important to you . . . in this case; Save Our Service! Every member should be well versed on the issues and talking points by now. Don't be shy!

In my own 1st Congressional District, largest land area district east of the Mississippi, encompassing the entire upper peninsula and top fourth of the mitten in the lower peninsula, some 32 ½ counties, there's 2 Dem challengers; Gary McDowell from Rudyard in the U.P. who ran and lost to Benishek in 2010, and a fresh new face; Derek Bailey from the Traverse City area and tribal chairman of the Grand Traverse Band of the Ottawa & Chippewa Indians. McDowell has been anointed by the State Dem Party which has not set well with northern State Dems, as well as endorsed by several Unions. Bailey is a young energetic and well-spoken man, knowledgeable who is experienced in having worked in the Obama administration in the area of health and welfare. Both are good men. McDowell served the U.P. in the State Senate with distinction, but besides having lost to Benishek in '10, his low keyed personality is about as exciting as cold oatmeal. Bailey offers a

fresh alternative. Hedging my bets; I've met with both and their campaign people presenting them with our APWU postal issues, stressed the closure of some 38 rural P.O.'s in the 1st District plus Gaylord and Iron Mountain/Kingsford plant consolidations, along with our printed materials. I forward the APWU E-Alerts to both.

Regardless which of these two candidates is successful in the August Primary, we have to work hard for their election to reclaim a friend in Congress from the 1st District. If you reside in the 1st District, get to know your candidate choices. Let them know who you are and that to Save Our Service is paramount to you. If you reside in another Michigan Congressional District represented by a skunk, I strongly suggest you follow the blueprint I've outlined herein. This unsolicited advice may not sit well with some Union leadership or even the political Party, but I'm in it to win, not to please the establishment. This is war, and desperate times call for desperate measures. As postal workers and retirees we're certainly in a position to be painfully aware of that fact.

**MICHIGAN ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS.** Michigan is organizing a state chapter of the MI ARA. The MPWU State Retiree Chapter has long been an ARA entity member at the national level. Unions and retiree organizations have come together to form the State ARA Chapter with a founding convention in Detroit on March 30th. At this writing, I am sending a ballot to each of our State Chapter E-Board officers to vote on approval to affiliate at the cost of an affiliation fee. Likewise, to approve appointment of Sister Regina Favors, former MPWU Legislative Dir., who is a member of the Detroit Dist. Area Local Retiree Chapter and automatic member of our State Retiree Chapter, to be our delegate to the founding ARA Convention and

our Chapter's primary contact person. The ARA is AFL-CIO backed and is a powerful voice for Union retirees and seniors on preserving Social Security and Medicare, as well as other paramount retiree and senior's legislative issues.

**STATE OF THE STATE RETIREE CHAPTER:** Briefly, the MPWU State Retiree Chapter is in excellent financial shape. We currently have over 1,300 members of the APWU Retirees Dept. Our officers and Local Retiree Chapters have been active in fighting the good fight in concert with our active Local's Brothers and Sisters to Save Our Service and represent the retiree membership on our paramount legislative issues. We are now in the process of planning for the State Chapter Constitutional Convention to be held on June 1st in Traverse City. I invite all our retiree members to check

out the corrected State

Retiree Chapter Convention Call for details, and further invite retiree members who would like to commute to Traverse City for our June 1st Chapter Convention which will feature APWU Retirees Dept. Director, Judy Beard, We're proposing to host a State Chapter pizza night at hospitality on Friday, June 1st and you're invited to renew old acquaintances. Retirees Rock!!!

**GO SPARTANS!** The successes of both the Michigan State University football and now, round ball (basketball) teams brings back warm memories or our dear late Brother, Jerry Martin. Martin lived and breathed 'Green & White'. He would be in his glory with all the Spartan's winning ways, and come to think of it . . . probably is! With no apologies to U.M Wolverine fans . . .

Be Strong!

## Desirable Duty Assignments

*continued from page 11*

agement jobs into more desirable duty assignments. It is called the “Function 1 and 4 Scheduler for Desirable Duty Assignments.” It is available to all local presidents. Therefore, if you are working on a grievance like this, contact your local president about this program. If it is just one or two crappy jobs, you can usually just eye ball the work schedules and see where certain clerk work hours can be used to fill in the needed hours for a more desirable job. You can use this language when jobs are reposted to improve the hours or days off. You can use this language when management is proposing a bunch of crappy NTFT jobs. Also, you can use this language to upgrade NTFT jobs to more hours in a week. Another application is to improve the present complement of jobs to better jobs. When management attempts

to convert traditional Full-time Regular jobs to NTFT jobs, you can argue this language to grieve this situation. This language is even cited in the NTFT Memo, so clearly this language applies to any NTFT jobs.

What clerk hours can be used to make more desirable duty assignments? When they cite all hours they mean all clerk work hours performed by anyone at all, whether they are clerks or not. You can use PSE hours, PTF hours, any cross craft hours (including injured employees working clerk work), overtime hours, loaner hours, management working in our craft, any and all work hours that could be construed as clerk hours, including TAC hours, data entry hours, reports of mail volumes, any other reports. Be as creative as you like to create more desirable duty assignments.



# ***Bad News Come In Threes:*** **How Congress, Management Industry, And Have Made A Mess Out Of Things**

by Mark Jamison

*(The author is a postmaster for the USPS. In keeping with the USPS Administrative Support Manual, section 363, Mr. Jamison does not “speak for or act on behalf of the Postal Service.” His comments represent his personal views and observations based on 28 years of service, and they are intended for no other purpose than to expand the conversation on an important public issue.—Ed.)*

**AMIDST THE SOUND AND FURY** of ideological punditry and political posturing that passes for thoughtful debate about the future of the Postal Service, three things are becoming clear: Congress is unable to take responsibility and solve problems, the commercial mailing and marketing industry has developed a sense of entitlement that undermines its own interests, and senior postal management has become imprisoned by its own circular thinking.

Watching what’s gone on the past few months can’t help but leave one with a sense of hopelessness. The legislative sausage grinder turns out compromises that appease politicians who have no real understanding of postal facts, that favor the commercial mail lobby, and that give the Postmaster General the tools he needs to dismantle the Postal Service. The mail industry encourages the dismantling, pressures the Postal Service for favorable discounts, and lobbies Congress for legislation that protects its profits. Postal management tries to keep the industry and Congress happy, but neglects the interests of its employees and the average citizen. Congress, the industry, and management are all in it together, but let’s take them one by one.

## **THE PEOPLE’S REPRESENTATIVES**

With each passing day it becomes painfully more obvious that Congress is completely out of touch with the problems of the American people. Worse, the politics of Washington has become so aggressively dysfunctional that our elected representatives are no longer capable of examining a problem from any perspective other than the one supplied by their most favored lobbyists.

Most of what passes for action in Washington is political posturing designed to get a senator or congressman positively portrayed in the media spotlight while abjuring them of the need to take any responsibility for the consequences of their positions or actions. Our elected representatives advocate for policies that often blow up, but they never pay the cost of their errors — their salaries, benefits, and institutional entitlements continue to flow. More often than not, the politician doesn’t even pay an electoral price since our hyper-partisan atmosphere causes most of us to vote for “our side” rather than considering character and intellect.

I would like to think that the folks who represent us in Washington bear some basic similarities to the rest of us. Politicians, despite their profession, are still human beings. They love their dogs and their families, and they are capable of expressing some warmth of human emotion or kindness. Even the most rabid ideologues must occasionally feel remorse for the harm they might have caused another person. They must feel a little shame, or at least some confusion, when they express a hypocritical thought.

But what are we to think when we hear politicians like Congressmen Darrel Issa from California and Dennis Ross from Florida make comments about the Postal Service that are so patently false? Do they know they are lying or at least grossly distorting the facts when they completely dismiss the fact that there are financial inconsistencies in the way the Postal Service has been treated?

If Mr. Issa and Mr. Ross were to stand up and proclaim that they believed that the American people would be better served by a privatized postal service, I would heartily disagree, but I would respect their willingness to express and pursue their ends openly. If they would clearly state their belief that we’d be better off with a postal system with a workforce that was not unionized and that paid workers the minimum wage and offered minimal benefits, at least we could have a meaningful discussion about the value of their system and the one I might prefer. We could at least look at some empirical evidence and allow folks to draw intelligent conclusions.

But instead of making their ultimate goals clear, politicians like Issa and Ross are dissembling about the real causes of the Postal Service’s financial problems, and they are not being straightforward about the true aims of their proposed reforms. The **Postal Reform Act** they have put forward would gut the Postal Service and prepare it for being broken up into pieces — “decoupled, bifurcated, and unbundled,” as the current parlance has it — so that it can be privatized. The aim is clear, but their rhetoric is not.

The Postal Service wallows in crisis today not because of the loss of mail volume but because of the provisions of the 2006 PAEA. The deficits incurred by the Postal Service over the last several years are virtually equal to the amounts withdrawn by the PAEA. That is a demonstrable fact. Just take a look at the Postal Service’s **2010 Annual Report**, where the Postal Service — rather than blaming the Internet, as it does every time there’s a meeting about a post office closing — provides a chart showing that “retiree health benefits prefunding is driving losses.”

The PAEA also failed to appropriately address other issues of transfers between the Postal Service and the Treasury. For example, the two retirement systems, FERS and CSRS, have basically become a means to transfer wealth from postal workers to the federal government. There are similar problems with workers’ compensations laws, specifically FECA, as they have been applied to the Postal service.

The PAEA also codified a complex and often convoluted rate system that is both expensive to manage and philosophically unsustainable. Senator Susan Collins of Maine was one of the primary sponsors of the PAEA, and at every opportunity she has made it clear that she considers herself an authority on postal matters. She intervened in the exigent rate case before the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), and attempted to rewrite PAEA by injecting her version of legislative intent into the proceedings. While the Senator seems a reasonably intelligent and personable individual, it’s not clear how much of an authority she is on postal issues. It is clear that among her constituents in Maine are

paper manufacturers and at least one very large catalog mailer.

I’ve heard Mrs. Collins make many pronouncements regarding the future of the Postal Service and I’ve seen her stand prominently in front of the cameras and speak seriously about the problems she seeks to solve. Unfortunately, I’ve never once heard her apologize for the mess she and PAEA created. Reading the history of PAEA and talking to some of the folks involved at the time, I’ve come to understand that PAEA was the typical legislative sausage making, designed less to solve problems than to ensure that constituent lobbies were properly cared for.

Mrs. Collins can actually articulate a pretty clear rationale for a healthy postal service that provides meaningful universal service across the breadth of this country. Unfortunately, she often seems to do this in the service of a piece of legislation that further undermines postal services in favor of narrow interests.

## **THE ENTITLED (AKA STAKEHOLDERS)**

Over the last twenty years postal legislation has heaped untenable burdens upon the Postal Service and its workers. It has also created a special class of postal customer — the stakeholder. The idea of the Postal Service as an essential national infrastructure that serves the American people has been seriously undermined. This democratic vision has been replaced by the view that the Postal Service is merely another player in the mailing industry, a player whose primary purpose is to facilitate the business model and increase the profits of commercial marketers and mailers. This has become increasingly clear from the briefs and arguments submitted by these stakeholders in various cases before the PRC.

The industry’s sense of entitlement has never been clearer than in **the brief submitted by Valpak** in the PRC docket for the Retail Access Optimization Initiative (RAOI). This document expresses a cynical disdain for rural America by characterizing small post offices as “unnecessary” and “inefficient” retail facilities. It assures us that the post office confers few “non-postal” benefits, and even if there were some benefits, they are irrelevant to the PRC’s Advisory Opinion about whether the Postal Service should go forward with its plan to close 3,650 post offices, most of them in rural areas of the country.

The brief quotes John Adams comment, “Facts are stubborn things,” as if to show how tough and realistic Valpak’s thinking is, but the brief bases its arguments on one of the greatest myths going: most post offices lose money. But that’s simply because of how the Postal Service does its accounting: postal facilities receive no credit for the mail they process and deliver. They only get credit for the postage they sell. In the case of large mailers like Valpak, that would be a BMEU. But the way Valpak — along with most of the mail industry and Postal Service management — looks at it, the retail operation and the delivery operation are completely separate. Revenue is only credited where mail is entered. But it takes the country’s entire postal infrastructure, including 32,000 post offices, to move that mail.

*continued on page 15*



# ***Bad News Come In Threes:*** **How Congress, Management Industry, And Have Made A Mess Out Of Things**

*continued from page 14*

In the exigent rate case an organization of mailers calling itself the Affordable Mail Alliance filed a brief that essentially said they were entitled to the lowest rates possible so paying postal workers anything above minimum wage was a burden they should not have to bear. Valpak reprises that argument and then adds that rural America really isn't worth serving after all. And as the comments flow in for the current rate case before the PRC, one can see this kind of thinking repeated over and over by the segment of the mailing community that includes the presort houses, the direct marketers, and the catalog mailers.

The sense of entitlement expressed by some very profitable enterprises probably shouldn't come as a shock, but it is sadly ironic. The people who talk "class warfare," who express nothing but disdain for government entitlement programs, who heap abuse after abuse on the average working person, who see the government's effort to protect citizens by regulating business as nothing but interference in the marketplace — the truth of it is that these are the same people who are themselves engaging in class warfare, who have the most active sense of entitlement, and who demand the most from the government, through helpful legislation, favorable tariffs, tax breaks, subsidies, and all the other things they lobby for. Call them the "one percent" or whatever you choose, these people are the best off among us, and the least in need of such help. Irony and injustice aside, Valpak and the other mailers are simply wrong when they attack the postal network and postal workers. The USPS is the largest postal network in the world and covers more addresses and territory than any other postal system in the world. It delivers 40% of the world's mail, and it does so at rates that are cheaper than anywhere else in the world. Without this system, Valpak and most of the other stakeholders wouldn't even exist.

The postal network was originally designed to bind the nation together, and that meant providing a way to move the mail quickly and efficiently. Of course that capability assisted commerce, but there were also social and political aims that were equally important, if not more so. That's why the development of the postal system was driven primarily by the very democratic concept of universal service.

Cheap ubiquitous service allowed for the development of several new industries, such as direct marketing. Companies like Valpak couldn't begin to get the volume and penetration they currently enjoy without the Postal Service. And just as the Postal Service embraced a business model driven by volume, so did companies like Valpak find that it was easier and cheaper to saturate the market by putting a lot of pieces out there rather than intelligently targeting particular consumers. Under this model they can rely on a 2% response rate and still make lots of money (which they do). Presort mailers and catalog mailers receive similar benefits from the vast postal network.

One of the things that rarely gets mentioned in all the talk about what's wrong with the Postal Service and postal workers is that the mail gets delivered and, by and large, it gets where it's going. The physical infrastructure of post offices, processing

plants, and vehicles is of course essential, but the mail wouldn't move without the professional class of people who process, sort, and deliver it. I can hear people scoff at that observation, and yes, we all have a Seinfeld story about the post office (like the one where Neumann the mailman stores mail in his apartment), and postal workers can tell you horror stories of plant managers hiding or mishandling mail to make numbers. But by and large the mail gets handled properly and efficiently.

One of the consequences of having a reasonably paid and compensated workforce is that it engenders pride and commitment to the job. The American worker is constantly criticized, but the fact is that this nation became the most productive on earth because we developed a model that allowed the greatest number possible to share in the success. We created a model that built pride and commitment to work, and one of the great fallacies today is the idea that beggaring the work force is somehow efficient.

People trust their mail carrier, and people generally trust the post office. Customers may complain about long lines or a letter in the wrong mailbox, but the system works because of this sense of trust, a trust that's built on countless daily interactions between citizens and clerks, carriers, and postmasters.

So here's a message for the big stakeholders, the mailers and marketers: Change the Postal Service's successful model and see how folks feel about your product. They call it "junk mail" and seek "do not mail" lists — make the network and the folks who run it "irrelevant," and see how much respect your product gets. Beggar the workforce and replace it with contractors and minimum-wage workers, and you'll get what you pay for. Shrink the network by "optimizing" post offices and processing plants out of existence, and you'll find that it's your business model that's irrelevant and extinct.

**"Do as I say!": The autocratic management style**

Finally we come to the management of the Postal Service. One need only read the Postal Service's "initial brief" summarizing its case for closing post offices for the RAOI to realize how hostile and out of touch these managers have become. The brief suggests that only the witnesses for the Postal Service could know the truth, and anyone who presented testimony that contradicted its case must be stupid or prejudiced. The Postal Service berates witnesses for being insufficiently empirical, as if quantities of meaningless data were more persuasive than the quality of personal experience and first-hand knowledge.

The Postal Service says that all of the community meetings related to post office suspensions and closings were held exactly as the law prescribed. What then are we to make of the many news reports and appeal petitions to the contrary? They tell of meetings scheduled at inconvenient times, discontinuance coordinators ill informed about the local community, no postal personnel taking notes of what people say, no manager present at all.

And while the Postal Service has recently announced that it was permissible to videotape and record community meetings, what are we to make of the fact back in August, a member of the com-

munity who tried to record a meeting was ordered by the postal operations manager to stop, and when he refused, the police were called and **they escorted him out** of the meeting?

Every postal employee can relate an incident of managerial bullying or simple cognitive dissonance. As a postmaster, I've driven an empty mail tub on a ninety mile round trip in the middle of the night to satisfy some nonsensical protocol. I watched a Plant Manager scream at his floor supervisors until they dissolved into tears. Postal workers have all seen behavior that ranged from simply boorish to wasteful and outright abusive.

A few weeks ago an article appeared in the Federal Times about the \$641 million lost by the USPS in grievances annually. It's a common narrative for people to blame things like that on the unions, but the fact is that it is management that violates the contract and it's management that doesn't do the basic minimum to get things right.

Ingrained in the management culture of the Postal Service is a belief that whatever managers say is right "because we said so." They act as if employees under their supervision were lazy, stupid, or liars. The mistrust breeds mistrust. And then there are all the meaningless forms and checklists and impossible targets that supervisors and postmasters are required to deal with. While these procedures are intended to ensure that people are doing their jobs, they just contribute to the lack of trust and the lack of real accountability.

I find it nearly impossible to write about this aspect of the Postal Service. Unless one has worked in the environment and felt the impact of the culture, it's hard to understand the sense of frustration postal workers feel. But what is even more difficult to grasp is how most postal employees overcome this environment and find tremendous pride and satisfaction in their service. Often it seems the job gets done in spite of, not because of, senior management. And make no mistake, this culture, this cancerous attitude, is something that comes from the top because, by any measure, the Postal Service is an organization that is rigidly top down.

The last two postmasters general came out of craft. Both gentlemen worked their way through the organization. It is hard to understand how they could not see the damage this culture creates. Both men seem like they passionately cared for the Postal Service, and yet each seemed imprisoned by this institutionalized behavior.

Perhaps some degree of cognitive dissonance is inevitable when the Postal Service is told to act "like a business" and at the same time required to fulfill the mandate of universal service. In many ways Congress and the Board of Governors have set an impossible task for the Postal Service and sought to make it something it can never become.

Still, one has to wonder if there is anything that passes for strategic thinking going on in L'Enfant Plaza. A couple of months ago the Village Post Office concept was going to be the solution to the shrinking of the retail network under the RAOI. The plan was rolled out with great fanfare, it was an important part of the RAOI plan, and it was the subject of many interrogatories and testimonies.

*continued on page 16*

# ***Bad News Come In Threes:*** **How Congress, Management Industry, And Have Made A Mess Out Of Things**

*continued from page 15*

Now as the PMG walks back from the VPO, we are told that the plans were not that serious, that they weren't fleshed out, and the VPO isn't going to work in rural America, where many towns don't even have a place to put a VPO.

One can look back over the years and find any number of instances where a big plan or program like the VPO was rolled out by the Postal Service, only to be scaled back or totally forgotten as time went on. Whether it was IMB or FSS, technical programs, or other initiatives, big plans often came to little or naught. Some sloppiness, incoherency, or inconsistency always seems to surface. Much as it does in its RAOI brief, the approach of the USPS often is simply to impose its will, to assert its correctness, and to deny any evidence to the contrary.

You can tell a rural carrier that EXFC requires her to drive up a snowy mountain road with downed

power lines, but that doesn't make it possible. You can tell a city carrier that four more swings can still get done in eight, but that doesn't make it so. You can plan for a machine to run x pieces per hour, but if the pieces aren't there or the program isn't right, it's just not going to happen. You can tell a small community that it doesn't need its post office, but that doesn't make it true.

I've been asked, what could senior management have done better? Well, they could have been consistent, they could have been realistic, they could have been honest. They could have recognized the value of the network instead of becoming preoccupied with downsizing and "optimizing." They could have focused on quality of service instead of clinging to a system predicated on volume. They could have thought more about how to serve the general public instead of worrying so much about the big stakeholders. They could have done more

to meet the challenges introduced by the Internet and changing business methods. They could have addressed a top-heavy Area and District structure. They could have created programs to develop a professional management class, and they could have let those managers manage. They could have created a meaningful employee feedback mechanism instead of one that told them what they wanted to hear. Instead of driving mail in circles they could let EXFC tell them the truth — at far less cost.

Simply put, they could have listened.

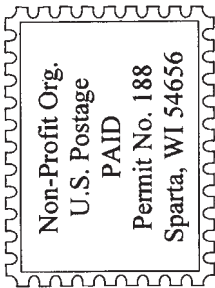
Perhaps if they had, we might not find ourselves facing such a depressing impasse. Congress isn't going to change anytime soon. The mailers (and I guess the 1%) aren't going to lose their sense of entitlement willingly. And it's unlikely that HQ will

open the windows and let in some fresh air.

None of this speaks well for the future of postal services in this country. Still, I can't help but hope. Perhaps the deterioration of a cherished institution, the lack of vision demonstrated by our representatives, and the continued attacks on our working population and our sense of community will serve as a wake-up call.

We'd better wake up soon because there's more at stake than post offices and postal services. If jobs can be disposed of so ruthlessly, if communities can be disposed of so cynically, if an institution that helped build the country — and that still helps hold it together — can be disposed of so carelessly, we are all in deep trouble.

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## **Mobilizing Poem**

by Paul Felton

They say the Post Office will fail  
'cause people just don't use the mail  
Some financial problems arose  
And many plants will have to close  
Which also means, our bosses say  
We can't deliver the next day  
And this unfortunate delay  
Is going to be the only way  
To meet our goals with any success  
It also means they'll have to excess  
And take away a lot of bids  
So tell your spouse and tell your kids  
That everything is going to change  
Your whole schedule must rearrange  
Is this the only way to get by?  
No, they are telling us one big lie  
It's Congress that caused this postal mess  
We need to put the heat on Congress  
So tell every neighbor and every friend  
There's a message that we need to send  
And we need to raise quite a fuss  
To those in DC who represent us  
Just give us back the money we're owed  
And we can take another road  
Without making Post Offices shut down  
In major cities and small towns  
Change the law they passed in twenty-oh-six  
And that will be enough to fix  
The phony crisis they created  
And these drastic changes can be negated  
If we act now, I know we can  
Put in place another plan  
That will allow us all to stay  
At our same jobs with our same pay  
And give to the public that we serve  
The mail service that they deserve