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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Hillary And Bernie	2
Editor's Report.....	3
Legislative Report	4
480-481 Area Local	5
NBA Report	5
Veterans Report.....	6
SEIU To Michigan	7
Six Words.....	8
MPWU 25th Biennial Convention	9
Retiree Involvement.....	10
2016 Michigan State Retiree Chapter 8th Biennial Constit. Convention..	11
Don't Spread Fear And Hate	12

President's Message



by Michael
Mize,
President

Money To Clerks; Water To Flint

Well the first payments from the Global Remedy settlement have been sent out. I am sure it will not surprise many of you that there are issues with the payments and some of the people receiving payments did not receive the proper amounts. Many people may not know for certain how much money they were supposed to receive and as such do not know they were shorted.

All of this being said the APWU at a National level has taken all the steps necessary to be sure that the problem is fixed. They have requested the information to verify the payments made and what errors there are. There has already been a National Dispute filed

to be certain it all gets corrected. It is very unfortunate that the Union will spend even more time to get this all corrected, but the good thing is there

that was originally listed for you to be paid. If the amount you received is different than the amount listed then there was an error made in your payment.

travesty. As the President of the Flint Michigan Area Local and the Michigan Postal Workers Union it is a pleasure to work with such a great group of Labor oriented caring individuals. We have received word from National that they are willing to help as well, which as this situation unfolds over the next few months could be an appreciated offer. At this

It is very unfortunate that the Union will spend even more time to get this all corrected, but the good thing is there are good people fighting for your rights.

are good people fighting for your rights.

Meanwhile to be sure that everyone can know for themselves what the amount they should receive per the Union, National has put the information on the web page. You can log on to the APWU home page at APWU.org and go to the "members only" tab. At that point you can enter your information and the page will identify the amount

With any luck the corrections will reach you before this paper, but if not you know where to look.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the leaders and members of all the Locals that have passed resolutions, working on resolutions, donated water or donated money to help the community in the City of Flint. The water situation here in Flint is an absolute

moment there are a great deal of donations coming in and the Community is receiving needed supplies. My concern is down the road when the media blast calms down. When it is not the new news the donations may slow and the need may still be high. We may be able to help more down the road as much or more than now.

In Unity.

Clerk Craft Director's Report

— Past Practice —



by Thomas
Lothamer,
Clerk
Craft Director

I received a notification recently from a Union sister that got me to thinking that there needs to be a little clarity on the definition of past practice. In this case a carrier was in violation of distribution of PO Box mail and the Postmaster claimed it was a past practice.

Just because staffing sucks within our Postal Service and because of service commitments and budgetary restraints, the use of another craft, I.E. city carriers, rural carriers, custodians, managers, etc . . . does not mean it is okay to utilize these employees in the performance of our work and it most certainly does not make it a "past practice". Managers throw this rhetoric around like they know what the hell they are talking about when in fact they do not! So to educate our members, stewards, and yes even non-members and managers here is the straight poop. This is right out of our Stewards Training Manual.

Standards Determining Past Practice

It is difficult to identify standards by which arbitrators determine if a practice exists and how much weight it should be given insofar as their decision and award is concerned. However, there are some very definite ingredients, when the question of past practice is taken under consideration by the arbitrator:

Consistent – The practice has been granted or applied consistently, uniformly, regularly and without break.

Clearly stated – The practice has been observed by the parties and is followed without protest or objection from one party or the other.

Duration – The policy has existed and been followed over a reasonably long period of time. In this regard a "bridge effect" may be of significance to some arbitrators. The bridge effect results from a practice under one agreement and continuing unchanged and not protested into a renewed agreement, as a

result it bridges one collective bargaining agreement with another between the parties without having been changed or discontinued.

Jointly accepted and acted upon

– Both parties, through their line representatives, have operated as though the practice, in fact, existed and was a guiding rule.

Protect your work people and if it comes into question then give us a call. We have worked too hard to have our work given away to some uneducated BS. And yes this also means the work that is not "desirable," truck drivers

do not do dispatch, some offices do passports and this means when we are short staffed as well. Carriers should not be sorting parcels just because it is Christmas and the work load is heavy and your manager needs you to get it done to make some "scan." They created this mess and our contract states "a fair days work for a fair days pay." Care about yourself and what we have achieved. You are not doing our service a disservice by saying we need more staffing. Don't fall for the myth that is all that can be done. We need more career clerks, protect our work, don't drink the Kool-Aid and make a better effort to understand "Past Practice."

CONTRACT UPDATE

Our contract arbitration starts February 17th.

Wear a sticker: Fighting for Justice!



by Paul Felton, Editor

Editor’s Report

Bernie And Hillary: A Response

Leo makes a fundamental error in his article criticizing the APWU Executive Board’s endorsement of Bernie Sanders. He equates membership in the Democratic Party with union membership and calls Bernie a “scab” for remaining outside the Democratic Party all these years. It has never been APWU policy to only support candidates who are Democrats. It has always been APWU policy to support the best candidate, regardless of party. In fact, *Bernie’s positions on the issues are better than that of most Democrats.* And he has been a leader in Congress in the fight against cutbacks and attacks on postal workers.

In my view, the Democratic Party has two souls – a corporate soul and a progressive soul. Usually, the higher up in the party structure you go, the more corporate you get. How many times has the labor movement endorsed Democrats, worked like hell to get them elected, only to be disappointed in the end? Hillary represents the corporate soul of the Democratic Party. That’s where she gets the majority of her campaign money, and you can bet that will influence her policies once in office. Corporate Democrats like Hillary have to maintain a careful balancing act, giving a little bit to labor while not offending her corporate donors too much. A corporate Democrat is like a nice supervisor at the Post Office. More pleasant to work for than an ignorant bully (which is what the labor-hating Republicans are like) but in the end, even though they smooth over situations when they can, they still report to the same upper management/corporate donors.

For example, in the Bill Clinton administration, we got NAFTA shoved down our throats – a disastrous trade deal that the Republican Bush Administration couldn’t get through Congress. Clinton made it his top priority and twisted enough arms so some Democrats would join the Republicans in passing this job-killing deal. At that time, the top priority of the labor movement was a bill making it illegal to permanently replace striking workers. Bill Clinton would’ve signed it into law if it passed, but he put no effort into helping it along. It never came close to passing. On the other hand, he did sign the FMLA into law.

Speaking of NAFTA and “free trade,” Bernie has always taken a strong stand against these job-killing deals. Hillary couldn’t make up her

mind on the TPP until just before the first televised debate. That, plus her history, makes me doubt the depth of her convictions on this issue.

Leo talks about going to Congress for a raise in 1968 and getting a warm reception from the Democrats. The Democratic Party has changed since then; it is much more corporate-influenced. In

Bernie’s positions on the issues are better than that of most Democrats.

the ’60s it was influenced by the mass movements sweeping the country. Even so, whatever raise postal workers were given in 1968 still left us in poverty. It was the movement – embodied by the 1970 strike – that started postal workers on the path toward a living wage.

Bernie is unique in two ways. He doesn’t take money from corporations, so they won’t influence his policies. And he wants to build a mass movement of activists to counter the influence of the corporate wealthy. He recognizes that one person – be it Bernie or Hillary – can’t do it alone. The only way to counter the influence of money in politics is with millions of activists in the streets. Bernie is not just running a campaign to elect an individual; he is building the kind of movement we need. The kind

of movement that can break through the gridlock in Washington.

On postal issues, we don’t have to guess where Bernie stands. He has stood with postal workers and with working people in general for his entire life. He has walked on countless picket lines (and not just at election time). He has opposed plant closures and service

standard reductions. In fact, he supports expanding postal services. He opposes the ridiculous pre-funding requirement that gives postal management an excuse to cry poverty at contract time. We can be confident that when it comes to filling vacancies on the Board of Governors, we will like his nominees. I’m not sure we can say the same about a corporate Democrat.

Leo says the reason the Republicans attack Hillary is that she is the strongest candidate and the Republicans could more easily beat Bernie. Maybe that’s not true. Maybe they just assume she’s going to be the nominee. The corporate-controlled media seem to think so, just like they declared her the winner in the debates. I saw something different in the debates – I saw Bernie setting the

agenda and Hillary struggling to catch up (up until the January 17th debate in which she changed tactics and mischaracterized Bernie’s positions on guns and health care). I already mentioned Hillary’s last-minute conversion to oppose the TPP. Here’s a couple more examples. Bernie supports the movement for a \$15/hour minimum wage. Hillary came out for \$12/hour. Bernie argues that in today’s world a college degree is as necessary as a High School degree used to be. He wants public colleges to be tuition free. Hillary’s proposal doesn’t go quite that far. It makes me wonder if she would even address these issues if Bernie wasn’t running.

Like Leo (I assume), I am a card-carrying Democrat. Within the two-party system we have, they are clearly the better choice. I go to meetings of the 14th district Democratic Party and see a lot of progressive people there. And in Michigan, Democrats opposed all the Republican attacks on unions, culminating in so-called “right-to-work.” Speaking nationally, I know that even a corporate Democrat who tries to achieve a balance between corporations and labor is better than a labor-hating Republican. So I will vote for the Democratic nominee, whoever it turns out to be. But meanwhile, I will use my influence to support a true friend of postal workers and ordinary people for that nomination: Bernie Sanders.

Trump, The Union-Buster

Note: this article is reprinted from Tour’s End, an APWU newsletter from Gainesville, Florida.

After voting on December 4th and 5th the employees at the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, by a majority, have chosen to unionize.

The workers will be represented by the Culinary Workers Union Local 226 and the Bartenders Union Local 165 of UNITE HERE.

More than 500 eligible employees voted in the election. The election results were released to the press by the Union but the National Labor Relations Board would need to ratify it.

On December 15th, it has been reported that the Hotel has refused to recognize its workers’ union.

During organizing the workers have faced intimidation and retaliation. Trump and his co-owner contracted

an anti-union law firm to discourage the workers from organizing. Just last year the hotel violated federal labor law by suspending five workers for wearing union buttons and talking to their coworkers about the union drive. In August 2015, the NLRB sided with the union in another complaint against Trump Las Vegas. It was alleged the company “interfered with, restrained and coerced workers in the exercise of federally protected rights, including incidents of surveillance, interrogating, and threatening workers with reprisals, rules suppressing employee free speech, and on one occasion physically pushing workers in the parking lot.”

The complaint also alleges that Trump Las Vegas fired a union-supporting employee in order to discourage her co-workers from engaging in union activities.

Workers at union hotels get paid \$3.33 more than the Trump hotel workers, they pay no monthly health

insurance premiums, and their family members get medication fully covered. They are also guaranteed a pension for retirement.

Hillary And Bernie

continued from page 2
APWU National Executive Board was far too early, and for no justified reason.

Sorry again but the APWU leadership picked a freeloader over a true Democrat. I know that may be a little strong but I firmly believe it is true. The USPS and the APWU will not survive with a republican in the White House for the next 4 years, and only one Democrat can stop that. I think all Democrats know that is Hillary. I hope you give a lot of thought to this and join me in this political fight to elect the best, and only Democratic candidate.

Union 24/7.



by Roscoe Woods,
Legislative Director

We are not makers of history. We are made by history.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

When democracy is stolen it becomes so easy to make decisions that poison an entire city. Make no mistake, what is happening in Flint can just as easily happen to us all. Since the GOP take over here in Michigan we have seen one attack after another on the democracy so many on the right go out of their way they say they are defending.

Let’s Review –

Through the emergency manager laws passed here in Michigan the Governor can now replace properly elected leaders of a city with his or her handpicked selection who can then undo labor agreements, ignore city councils as well as elected school boards. These appointees make decisions that are anything other than transparent and in fact this Governor and this legislature have passed laws that make it harder for me and you to know what is actually happening in our democracy.

Elections have consequences.

You cannot say you respect democracy then vote to deny it to an entire city. What makes this Flint issue so much more tragic is that the Governor knew early on that the action being taken in Flint to save money was in fact poisoning the city’s people and he still did nothing.

Over the last two years a series of events in Flint has allowed for the city’s residents to be poisoned with lead contaminated water. That is the short one sentence version of a catastrophic manmade disaster but it is important that we all take notice because the laws put in place over the last 7 years here in Michigan make it possible that this or something similar to this can happen anywhere in this state.



Roscoe Woods presenting a \$500 check from the 480-481 Area Local to the Genesee County United Way for the residents of Flint.

Legislative Report

Flint’s Water Crisis

The GOP has done all they can to deconstruct any regulatory authorities that might have prevented this. And what I find particularly maddening is what I read at <http://www.electablog.com/> on January 15th, 2016:

Flint, Michigan was under the control of an Emergency Financial Manager from 2002-2004. Then, in 2011, it was again put under state receivership, this time under an Emergency Manager with expanded powers under what is now Public Act 436, the “Local Fiscal Stability and Choice Act” where it remained until last

mayor. I agree with her, and have asked the Receivership Transition Advisory Board to support that resolution.”

What is unfortunate is that this didn’t happen years ago. After all, had elected officials been making the decisions, they would have been accountable to their constituents and it’s highly unlikely they would have taken the steps that led to the current crisis. But now that they are in dire straits, Gov. Snyder is ready to wash his hands of the city...

electablog – 1-15-16

Electablog nails it and the point is clear,

When democracy is stolen it becomes so easy to make decisions that poison an entire city.

summer when the final Emergency Manager turned over control to a Transition Advisory Board composed of nine people, *most of which were appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder.*

Now that Flint has been put under a state of emergency by Gov. Snyder due to the poisoning of their drinking water with lead due to actions taken by state-appointed Emergency Manager Darnell Earley, Gov. Snyder is ready to hand back the reins of power to the new mayor, Karen Weaver:

“The Flint city charter establishes a mayor-centric form of government,” Snyder said in a statement. “Flint is headed by the mayor who serves as the city’s chief executive and the City Council, serving as the city’s legislative body. The city currently is in receivership, and the city administrator is responsible and accountable for the day-to-day city operations.”

“Mayor Weaver has requested that the powers and authority currently vested in the city administrator be transferred to the

the GOP’s emergency manager legislation allowed for political appointees to step in. With no oversight or debate they have created what is now a national emergency and they want to kick it back to local officials to deal with.

Many of Flint’s children will be dealing with the effects of this lead contaminated water for the rest of their lives.

Lindsey Smith at Michiganradio.org has been doing some great reporting on this crisis as well and she has an article posted titled:

Reporter’s notebook: Some state officials still in denial or misinformed over Flint River decision. I encourage you all to point and click and read it. It is far too detailed and lengthy to copy and paste here but it does an excellent job of simply recapping the facts and the timeline of this manmade disaster.

Her reporting dispels one lie being perpetrated by those trying to protect the Governor and that is that the Flint City Council somehow voted and approved the switch from buying water from Detroit to getting it directly from the Flint River. That is flatly not true and it is important as we search for justice in this matter that we all know the facts. It appears that in February of 2013 the Flint City Council determined the Flint River was not a good source for their water supply; at some point that decision was over-ridden by an appointee.

Several locals in the MPWU have signed off on and voted for resolutions that among other things call for the governor to resign, other MPWU locals called for this as well as a federal investigation into how an entire city was poisoned. The solidarity with Flint is important and necessary. The 480-481

Area Local voted for a resolution that states in the resolve:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the 480-481 Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union calls for the immediate resignation of Governor Snyder.

WE FURTHER RESOLVE THAT: *The United States Federal Government pursue all appropriate legal and criminal action against all that were involved in poisoning the Flint water, including but not excluding Governor Snyder.*

Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.
– Martian Luther King Jr.

As the GOP here in Michigan attacks the public services that are vital to our health and wellbeing we all need to know this can happen to any one of us. Our air quality, the quality of our drinking water can all be sacrificed to save a few bucks as well as to avoid just adding one more dollar to the tax bill to the richest of us all in this state.

It is clear to me that the evidence of this lead contamination was there and because the people in charge were all political appointees and not elected officials, the pleas were ignored and have left in their wake a crisis of a magnitude too large to quantify. This really is an example of what you get when you elect people who hate government to run the government.

The governor and his appointees have no sense that they are actually supposed to put the interests of the people in front of the interests of a dollar or their political ideology. Regardless of where you live in this state, we must recognize that the last 7 years have not improved the quality of life here in Michigan and we must do so in full recognition of the fact that the GOP here in Michigan have had total control of this state.

November 2016 will be here soon enough and we will then have a chance to put people who care about people back in charge of this state.

I will leave you with one last quote:

“Because of the conduct by Gov. Snyder’s administration and his refusal to take responsibility, families will suffer from lead poisoning for the rest of their lives. Children in Flint will be plagued with brain damage and other health problems. The people of Flint deserve more than an apology.” – Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders – Candidate for President of the United States of America calling for the resignation of Governor Snyder.

In Solidarity.

480-481 AREA LOCAL: Call For Governor Snyder To Resign

WHEREAS: Residents of Flint are drinking water with an unhealthy amount of lead, and

WHEREAS: The health impact on the children of Flint are irreversible, and

WHEREAS: The decision to switch to the Flint River as a water source was made by an Emergency Manager appointed by Governor Snyder, and

WHEREAS: Even after it was clear that this intolerable situation existed, the Snyder Administration

denied there was any problem, and

WHEREAS: Even after Governor Snyder was pressured into declaring a state of emergency, no measures have been taken by the Governor to provide safe water to Flint residents on an emergency basis, and

WHEREAS: Governor Snyder in effect has denied Flint’s citizens first of democracy and second of unpoisoned water, and

WHEREAS: The actions of this Governor could

be considered criminal, and

WHEREAS: In the United States of America no one is above the law, therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the 480-481 Area Local of the American Postal Workers Union calls for the immediate resignation of Governor Snyder, and be it further

RESOLVED: That the United States Federal Government pursue all appropriate legal and criminal action against all that were involved in poisoning Flint’s water, including but not excluding Governor Snyder.

Another Man-Made Disaster

Like the city of Flint. Detroit Public Schools are also under an Emergency Manager. The following conditions exist (info taken from the Detroit Federation of Teachers Stateweb)

- **Thirkell Elementary-Middle School** — Not enough teachers, so eighth-graders are housed in the gym and pulled out for instruction in core subjects for only an hour or so each day. The ceiling is so compromised that rain and snow pour in. Teachers get just one prep period a month.
- **Osborn High School** — The building is literally falling apart.
- **Moses Field School (for students with severe cognitive impairment)** — Boiler is broken, causing drastic temperature fluctuations; infestations of rats, other rodents, roaches and bed bugs; and no security guard.
- **Palmer Park Preparatory Academy** — Pieces of the ceiling are falling on kids’ heads and rats run around.
- **Jerry L. White Center High School** — No heat, no security guard.
- **Bates Academy** — Security issues, mice, heating issues, computers are broken.
- **Dossin Elementary-Middle School** — Standing water in classrooms, holes in the ceiling, a classroom without power due to black mold in the wiring.
- **Sampson Academy and Douglass Academy for Young Men** — No heat.
- **Ronald Brown Academy** — A special education class has no textbooks; slimy growth on the walls and crumbling ceilings.
- **Western International High School** — Rats, roaches, not enough books, classes with 45 children.
- **Golightly Education Center and Emerson Elementary-Middle School** — Classes with 45 students.
- **Mann Elementary School** — Untrained teacher forced to administer medication to student suffering severe seizures.



by Michael O’Hearn,
National Business Agent

Being a steward is the hardest job in our union. The job of steward is different from all other union jobs. Special rights and privileges are assigned to stewards. The privilege most people talk about is the right to be excluded from excessing. Local Presidents are not protected from excessing. No other union officers are protected from excessing. Article 17 Section 3 states in part, “While serving as a steward or chief steward, an employee may not be involuntarily transferred to another tour, to another station or branch of the particular post office or to another independent post office or installation unless there is no job for which the employee is qualified on such tour, or in such station or branch, or post office.” Therefore, normally stewards cannot be excessed from their site. This is to ensure that the people who rely on their steward will continue to have the proper representation.

Stewards have the right to leave their work area for union business

with their supervisor’s approval. Stewards have the right to enter other sections or offices on union business with the supervisor’s or Postmaster’s approval of the other section or office. Stewards can interview the grievant, witnesses, other workers and managers while on the clock to investigate a possible grievance. Stewards have the right to investigate, write, research, and meet with management concerning a possible grievance on the clock. Stewards have the right to request information from management on a potential grievance. Stewards have the right to settle grievances, withdraw grievances or move grievances to the next step of the grievance procedure. Of course, when withdrawing a grievance, the stewards must use reasonable care to not withdraw a sound grievance in a capricious or arbitrary manner. When settling a grievance, stewards should be careful to resolve grievances in a reasonable fashion. When representing the bargaining unit, stewards are considered the equal of managers. Stewards should always be careful to

be swiped over to union time when exercising these rights.

Stewards have special immunities when discussing grievances with management. Stewards can use language not usually tolerated by other employees. Loud language, abusive language, crude and obnoxious language may be allowed in a private meeting with management. However, this behavior is not protected

Locals Take Action

On January 10th the 480-481 Area Local adopted the resolution that is reprinted on this page, calling for Governor Snyder to resign. (At that time, Snider had not yet asked for federal help, which he has since been pressured to do.) On that

on the workroom floor in front of other employees. I recommend that you not use this type of language. Just because you can cuss at the supervisor does not mean you should do this. Remember you are representing the members. If you lose your cool, you will not be effective in your representation for your grievant or grievants. A professional demeanor will always bring the best results for your members.

The 480-481 Area Local also voted to donate \$500 to provide bottled water to the residents of Flint.



by John P. Smeekens,
Veterans
Director

Battle Creek Cyber Squadron

Senator Debbie Stabenow, along with Congressman Fred Upton and Senator Gary Peters, celebrated the announcement of the Michigan Air National Guard’s 110th Attack Wing, stationed in Battle Creek, as being the host of a new Cyber Operation Squadron distinction. With this Country’s dependence of our military, infrastructure, and economy on computers and the Internet, this new cyber squadron will put Michigan at the forefront in protecting our nation. Several politicians, earlier this year, were taken on a tour of Michigan’s military installations – including Battle Creek Air National Guard Base – to see firsthand the important role Michigan plays in our nation’s defense. This announcement is a credit to the men and women in Battle Creek’s 110th Attack Wing. It also underscores our State’s leadership and expertise in cyber security. A Cyber Operations Squadron is a 70-person dual-use squadron which conducts a multitude of cyber domain operations in support of the overall Air Force Cyber Mission Force. The 110th Attack Wing is already home to a pilot program that has trained technicians and has much of the infrastructure required to take on this new mission.

Camp LeJeune Eligibility

The VA has announced that it will

classify eight medical afflictions as presumptive disabilities for purposes of adjudicating compensation benefits for veterans who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987. Additionally, National Guard and Reserve service members who did not serve on active duty but conducted training at the base will be considered as part of this expanded policy. This means that the VA will now presume that a Veteran’s exposure entitles that Veteran to VA disability compensation benefits for any of the eight covered conditions. This is a major change because no conditions were considered under presumptive status for disability benefits. Currently, the VA only provides no-cost health care for 15 covered conditions. Moving forward, those who receive VA compensation benefits will also be eligible for VA health care if they were not otherwise eligible. As a result, veterans who served 30 or more days at Camp Lejeune between 1953 and 1987 and have been diagnosed with esophageal cancer, breast cancer, renal toxicity, female infertility, lung cancer, bladder cancer, hepatic steatosis, miscarriage, and neurobehavioral effects are eligible for no-cost VA health care, but are not presumed to be eligible for VA disability compensation benefits. Several Veterans Organizations are working to ensure veterans who suffer from medical conditions that are associated with exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune receive the health care and benefits they deserve and plan to hold the VA accountable,

making sure it’s presumptive list is accurate.

Those who have filed in the past and were denied, can file again. Those who are awaiting a decision, which could be denied, will not receive any decision until a final ruling is approved, on the proposed expansion. Any veteran who needs help completing a VA claim for their service relating to this expansion should contact one of their Counties Veterans Service Officers, or contact a Service Officer associated with the numerous Veterans Organizations in their Counties of residence. To read the VA’s announcement on this issue, go to; <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2743>.

COLA Relief ???

As a result of a negative change to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), VA and Social Security benefits were scheduled for no annual increase for 2016. The CPI fell slightly, due to a significant decrease in gasoline prices. Health care, housing, and food prices all rose this year, creating a hardship for many disabled veterans and senior citizens. In an attempt to solve this problem, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Representative Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) have introduced S. 2251 and H.R. 4144, the Seniors and Veterans Emergency (SAVE) Benefits Act, which would provide a one-time payment of \$581 to VA/Social Security beneficiaries. Disabled Veterans, receiving VA compensation, and Social Security recipients, are all encouraged to contact their Senators and Representatives to request their

support of these important bills.

Navy Lady Seals

The U. S. Naval Academy is preparing to open its Navy SEAL screening process to Women sometime in 2016. The school is presently awaiting specific guidance from the Navy before definitely opening the next spring screening for female midshipwomen, possibly making them, the Class of 2017, as the first to graduate from the academy, to go on to become members of the elite Naval Commando Force.

Northern Michigan Partnership

A new partnership with the Northern Michigan Veterans Coalition, and the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency is expanding the Veterans Community Action Team, also known as VCAT. The program will affect those Veterans and their families living in Michigan’s Prosperity Region 3. This will include the 11 counties of Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon. The coalition’s headquarters are in Gaylord and are managed by President Douglas Robinson. The coalition’s concerns are to connect service providers to one another and improve the delivery of services to Veterans. Mr. Robinson can be reached at 989-732-3886 on ext. 4234, or via e-mail at robinsond15@michigan.gov.

New Veterans Office H.L.C.C.

The Roscommon County Veterans Affairs office has expanded its services to the Houghton Lake Community Center on Thursdays from 10:00AM to 3:00PM. For information on what expanded services are available, or for Veterans affairs information call the Roscommon office at 989-275-7699. The Houghton Lake Community Center is located at 2625 S. Townline Road, while the Roscommon County Veterans Affairs office is located at 500 Lake St., in Roscommon.

Survey of Women Veterans

The VFW is trying to make sure that health care and benefits are equitable for both Men and Women Veterans. There is a survey, for our Female Veterans that has been commissioned by the VFW. The VFW will analyze survey results and direct feedback from Women veterans to make recommendations to the VA and Congress on how to meet their needs. If you are a Female Veteran, please take the VFW’s Survey of Women Veterans to help the VFW hold VA accountable for delivering the high quality benefits and services women veterans have earned and deserve. To take the survey, go to; <https://www.research.net/r/VFWSurveyofWomenVeterans>.

Thank You And Facebook

by John P Smeekens, Veterans Director

It was Sunday morning, December 13th, 2015. I decided to go on the computer and check my e-mails. After that, I went onto Facebook to see if the VA had any new updates. I’m on Facebook because the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, is constantly putting up new info for our Veterans, their Spouses and their Families. After investigating it thoroughly, that’s how I get some of my information to share with Veterans, their Spouses and their Families.

I’ve seen where the VA has a Veteran of The Day, which I thought was kind of cool. Whenever I see the new one for the day, I look it over and read it. So as I’m going through

the Facebook pages, there I am, as Veteran of The Day. It seems as though my wife Donna saw it, put together a submission, and sent it to the VA, via Facebook. Thanks Honey that was sweet of you. So she and my three Daughters explained to me what Likes and Shares were, and how to read this Facebook stuff. Hey look, I’m old, not too computer literate, and besides that, my Cell Phone has a dial. So as I’m going through and reading some of the Likes, and out came the Kleenex. Getting comments from my Union Brothers and Sisters was great, but as I’m going through the Likes, I’m realizing that some of these people saying Thanks, are from all over America. I’m talking 41 States here! Then I start seeing some from Australia, Denmark, France, United Kingdom and the Philippines. OMG I’m thinking through my tears, this is what they mean about Social Media is seen by everyone. I was shocked, overwhelmed, awestruck, etc. Then as I’m out in Public, some of my friends, previous co-workers, individuals who work or have worked with my Wife, and my Postal daughters, come up, or point to me and say “hey I saw you on Facebook.”

So, after two weeks, and being shown how to check this out on Facebook, I received 6,456 Likes, 1,190 Shares, and 357 Comments. And YES, I read them all!!! So to all of you out there on Facebook, who liked me or shared me or made a comment, THANK YOU!!!

DEADLINE
The deadline for articles for the
March-April issue of the
Michigan Messenger
is March 21, 2016

SEIU TO MICHIGAN:

— Hire More Veterans —

The following letter was sent by three SEIU Officers, Local 517M President George Heath, HSS Unit President Joey Combs, and Local 517M Director Liza Estlund Olsen.

December 16, 2015

TO: Michigan Civil Service Commission Members:

We are here today to address a significant concern regarding Veteran’s Preference and the State of Michigan’s current hiring practice.

Another November is over and the usual yearly accolades and patriotic back patting of Michigan veterans has subsided but the actual work on behalf of veterans remains. However, one of the largest employers in the state continues to make it very difficult for veterans to be hired even though the employer trots out veterans and talks about the need to eliminate barriers to employment while they themselves put a plethora of obstacles in every Michigan veteran’s path to employment. **That employer is the State of Michigan.**

Civil Service Rule 3-8 implements a Veteran’s Preference program that is designed to provide qualified veterans with increased access to state jobs through three (3) hiring process options. The problem

is the inconsistency with enactment of the Rule. Veterans can self-identify on the job application then they must go elsewhere in the process to complete a document registering for veterans’ preference and submit the required forms to the State by mail. At that point each State Department can decide if they are going to utilize veterans’ preference in each individual hiring process. There is no requirement that they apply veterans’ preference which is why few if any veterans are hired into state service.

We respectfully request all data compiled by Civil Service for each of the last six (6) years, that indicates how many veterans have been hired by the State of Michigan and how many of them were hired using Rule 3-8, be provided to us and the Commissioners so we all can review the State’s performance in this area.

The State does not need to make changes to the Veterans’ Preference program; it just needs to actually implement the program and make it easier for Michigan veterans to utilize. The hiring process is already automated so when a veteran indicates their veteran status on the application the registration for veterans preference form should pop up prepopulated from the information already entered by the applicant; the veteran should then just attach as part of the job application the appropriate military form(s). This requires less steps and ensures the information is

available throughout the hiring process. Likewise, through an already automated system ALL State Departments and their subsequent hiring entities should automatically include one of the 3 preference options for inclusion in the process. This eliminates the ability of the hiring group to opt out of enacting Rule 3-8 ensuring uniformity across State Government.

Additionally, state workers who are required to be veterans as part of federal program funding (WDA) should not have to use their one preference opportunity on a position already mandated by the federal government that it must be filled by veterans to begin with.

If the State of Michigan truly wants to help Michigan veterans get good paying jobs in Michigan it must stop abdicating its responsibility and require uniformity amongst ALL Departments at the beginning of the hiring process and fully implement Civil Service Rule 3-8. Pretending the State is doing all it can to help veterans by having Rule 3-8 and then making use of the Rule optional belittles those very veterans we point to with pride every November.

We respectfully request the Civil Service Commission, on behalf of Michigan veterans require ALL State of Michigan hiring processes fully utilize Civil Service Rule 3-8.



by Linda Turney, National Business Agent

When you read, you empower yourself. When you write, you influence others.

The U.S. Supreme Court: Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association

The U.S. Supreme Court just heard arguments in a labor case that could affect public sector employee unions nationwide. The case involves Non-Union public school teachers objecting to paying fair share dues to their local union. They argue that mandatory fees (dues) which support Collective Bargaining violate their First Amendment rights. Non-Union teachers state that bargaining with the local government is inherently political whether the Union is negotiating for class size, pensions or tax dollars. They state that the Union’s negotiating positions embody political choices that are controversial. (See Center for Individual Rights “CIR” website for their argument)

In deciding this case, the Supreme Court may overturn a 1977 case (Abood v. Detroit Board of Education) which allows for “fair share” fees requiring non-union members to pay dues to cover bargaining costs.

This is Union busting. This is an attempt to reduce Union income and influence. It is supported by big business and the right-wing members of our Government. These arguments are intentionally formulated to bankrupt public sector Unions whose members benefit from good wages, pensions, annual leave, sick leave and health care. If the Supreme Court eliminates the fair share dues and the rights and voices of workers, wealthy

corporate interests will be further enabled to continue to put profits ahead of workers and workplace rights.

A bad decision in this case could bring right-to-work laws across the country. Overturning Abood v. Detroit Board of Education will make it harder for Unions to have the ability to protect and bargain for all members. It would limit resources for organizing new workers.

This year 2016 is an election year. Elections do have consequences – such as nominations to the Supreme Court. As Union members, we must vote in our own best interests. Before you vote for any candidate, determine the position they hold on Unions and worker’s rights.

Hope you had great Holidays, see you at the arbitration table and Conventions.

Turney at the Table



by Wendy Kempke, Area 8 Director

Last year was full of a lot of changes and new beginnings with so many members changing offices and conversions and there are still more changes to come as we await our contract settlement. In the mean time, I’ve talked to many of our members in Area 8 and there are still issues that need to be taken care of. How many NTFT’s are not getting out of schedule pay? How many PTF Hub clerks aren’t getting mileage paid or have had it denied? Do you know what you’re entitled to? Do not let management tell you that you don’t get either of these. Let us know. Also, level 18’s please let

us know if management is working over their 15 hours. These three issues are what I hear about the most and we will get them settled for you. I’m looking for-

ward to this year and what we are setting out to accomplish.

In Solidarity.

Area 8 Director

Happy New Year!



Six Words

by Jeff Sabbag,
NALC Branch 4374

My first school friend was black. Those six words came to me fairly quickly, after reading a story about race relations. The article detailed a unique idea from National Public Radio’s Michelle Norris In 2012, Ms. Norris urged her listeners to open up a dialogue on race relations based on their own experiences and hopes for their futures. The only rule was the caller’s answer could only be one sentence long consisting of exactly six words! The undertaking became known as, appropriately enough, “The Six Word Race Card Project.” Soon the project spawned to social media and grew to quite a following. Despite the huge popularity of the endeavor. I was left wondering will there ever come a time in this country when race is as irrelevant as eye color?

In the fall of 1961 when I met my new friend, Stevie, America was on the cusp of social change. Just a decade and a half earlier the armed services of the United States was still segregated and major league ball players and the ball they threw were but one color. Martin Luther King’s iconic “I Have a Dream” speech and the March on Washington were still two summers down the road. Civil Rights legislation for voting and housing equality were yet to be proposed. Incredibly, at the time, several states even had laws on the books that made interracial marriage a crime. The riots that would engulf many major US cities throughout the decade were still on the horizon. During that long ago autumn, America stood at the intersection of hope and change. Now well over five decades removed from sitting with my kindergarten friend, Stevie, I think how far we as a nation have come, and sadly, how far we still have to go.

One need look no further than the nightly news to see daily issues that still divide this land. Be it the conduct of police officers and suspects in the street or a deranged 21 year old with a bad haircut and a virulent heart spraying his hatred in a Charleston place of worship, race is all too often the lead story. The latest debate is the uproar over the flying of the Confederate flag above the state capitol of many southern states. This one really dumbfounds me. Why are they flying the stars and bars of Dixie in the first place, didn’t they lose that war back in 1865? After all, the rising sun of Japan is not flapping in the breeze above Pearl Harbor! Following each of those stories, I would shake my head and think Martin Luther King’s dream is, regrettably, still just that.

Over the years, I have spent countless hours listening to Dr. King’s speeches in their entirety. The message was al-



ways the same, equality for all people. The magnitude of the message inspired the prolifically poetic song writer, Bob Dylan, to pen during those tumultuous times that the word equality was sacred and should be “spoken as if a wedding vow.” It is also as simple as the golden rule...treat another as you would like to

be treated. Martin Luther King’s words actually transcend race and apply to all mankind. One is left to wonder would this country be further advanced had Dr. King not stood on that Memphis balcony. Again, to borrow from Dylan, “the answer my friend is blowing in the wind.” Legislation has made inroads but

real change must come from within the heart of individuals.

The courts can strike down antiquated laws and politicians can pass progressive policies. However, as a society, we are to remain moored in an abyss of racial discord until all people, regardless of where they align themselves on the prism, view the other as mirrored. Courts and committees cannot change what lies within a man’s heart. Whenever I hear racial rhetoric, no matter who is speaking it towards whom, I’m baffled as to how it metastasized. Surely one is not born with animosity to another’s pigment. Call me crazy (trust me you wouldn’t be alone in that endeavor) but disliking someone should never be an automatic response to the color of someone’s skin, but rather on the disagreeable conduct of someone’s behavior.

An incident from many years ago has forever stayed with me. Thirty five years ago as the T-6 on an open route, a patron whom I regularly saw in his yard, inquired as to when they would be getting a new regular carrier for the route? I told the man, who up until this point had always seemed nice and pleasant, that a new carrier had been assigned and that they would be starting the route on Saturday. The man’s face suddenly turned harsh and his lips poisonous as he looked me in the eye and said “It isn’t a n*****, is it?” Shocked by the man’s venom, my gaze looking deep into his shallow soul, I answered “I don’t know, I can’t tell” and quickly walked away. That he felt so comfortable and cavalier with his hatred, because of some outward similarity we shared, left me insulted and weighed me

continued on page 12



Maintenance Craft Director’s Report

Document Our Work

by Sterling
Bouier,
Maintenance
Craft Director

Hello MPWU Brothers and Sisters, Happy New Year to everyone. Let’s work together this year to make 2016 a year of change for the better for us as individuals as well as a Union.

In the maintenance craft it is very important that we document our work. No matter what occupational group (ET/MPE/BEM/Custodial, etc...) **do not sign off work complete that has not been completed!!!** Either put a P for partial or a W for working on it/work still in progress. Also, if the work is not completed, ensure that you write a statement, notify your union official, so those bypassed or incomplete hours can be

tracked and addressed. It can affect your staffing.

If you are assigned to mail processing equipment, **ensure that you are assigned the appropriate time** for reactive maintenance (area assurance) and operational maintenance. There are checklists for each machine that state when, how, and how long operational maintenance is to be performed. The majority of the tasks on most machines must be assigned every two hours a machine is in operation. If this is not being done properly at your facility, write a statement and notify your union official.

And please **ensure that you are getting work orders** for any/all work that is not included in your route or ECBM checklist. Get work orders to change

belts, repair equipment, set up rooms or any other additional tasks.

We must fight for any and all hours in order to protect our staffing, therefore, protecting our jobs. The postal service is continually trying to reduce staffing and currently their focus is on the maintenance craft. As maintenance employees, we must be the eyes and ears for our Union and provide our union officials with the documentation and statements required to fight management to ensure proper staffing.

As always feel free to contact me if there are any questions or if you are in need of my services. I am here to serve.

In Union Solidarity.

Michigan Postal Workers Union 25th Biennial
Constitutional Retiree, And Auxiliary Convention

May 19 – 21, 2016 • Causeway Bay Hotel and
Conference Center • Lansing, Michigan

CONVENTION CALL

The 25th Biennial Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union will convene on May 19, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. at the Causeway Bay Hotel and Conference Center, Lansing, Michigan and will adjourn at the conclusion of business on May 21, 2016.

- Costs:**
- > **Hotel:** \$91.00 (plus applicable taxes (6% state sales tax and 7% county assessment)
 - > **Registration:** \$75.00 per delegate
- Resolutions need to be submitted to and received by Executive Secretary Michael Long by April 15, 2016. 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, 2016.

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 Easter Sunday.

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. Convention Delegates, plus Convention City, will be elected at this time, by secret ballot.

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. 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 all elected offices of the MPWU shall be the last order of business on Friday of the Convention. A member, in good standing not at the Convention, can provide a written nomination for themselves for any elected office of the MPWU, 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, except a person running for a Craft Director position, may run also for Area Director of his/her area. Any nominee must accept or decline a nomination for office, prior to the closing of nominations for that office.

Convention Delegates, as well as the Convention City, shall take place in conjunction with Executive Board/Officers nominations.

Saturday, from 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. President, Secretary-Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Director of Education, Human Relations/Compensation Director, Legislative Director, Editor, Three(3) Craft Directors, Area Directors, Veterans Director,

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 advice 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 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 President, 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 Robin
Ely,
Area 3
Director

Happy New Year!
Hopefully this will be a great year for everyone.

Attention ALL CLERKS:
We need your eyes in the offices we represent from all levels. We especially need your eyes in the smaller offices we represent that a steward or Area Director is not present. You may not see us or know us by name but we are fighting the battle of Article 1.6 Management Performing Bargaining Unit Work and the Global Settlement all clerks won dealing

Area 3 Director

We Need Your Eyes

with management’s 1260’s.

In level 20 offices and above management is NOT allowed to perform bargaining unit work unless it is an emergency. Define emergency: AN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCE. Not to save paying overtime, not because the schedule did not have enough coverage, shortage of clerks or any other issue management could have prevented.

In level 18 offices the postmaster, OIC, supervisor or 204B’s are not permitted to perform more than 15 hours of bargaining unit work in a 40 hour week.

In level 16 & 15 offices the postmaster, OIC, supervisors or 204B’s are not permitted to perform more than 25 hours of bargaining unit work in a 40 hour week.

Is management performing more bargaining unit work in your office than what is allowed in your size office? Are they performing more hours than they are recording on their 1260’s time sheet?

That is where we need your eyes. If you see that management is performing more bargaining unit work than they are allowed please report it to your Steward or Area Director.

They are stealing money out of your paychecks. The bigger picture they are stealing a job that belongs in the clerk craft.

Do not let management scare you and make you afraid to fight for the benefits the union has fought hard to win for each and every bargaining unit employee.

We are in this fight together. Let’s keep all bargaining unit work in the clerk craft.

Have a blessed year.



by Al
LaBrecque,
Retiree's Chapter
President

"Going all in without a winning hand is stupid." — Anon

This was an interesting view expressed by an APWU Sister in another state, who shall remain anonymous, reacting to the APWU announcement of the National Executive Board's (N.E.B) endorsement of the presidential candidacy of Senator Bernie Sanders (I).

I freely admit to have previously stated in this column that I was "all in" with Bernie. Not so much now. I like Bernie. His philosophies and message resonates with my working class beliefs. I fully recognize his outstanding support for our APWU issues. Because I have second thoughts, it's not to say I either oppose Sen. Sander's candidacy, or support either Hillary or Gov. O'Malley. I'm back in the realm of uncommitted for reasons I am relating herein in the full realization I risk of putting myself at odds with APWU leadership. Been there more often than not.

I've often declared that I'm a Union man first, and Democrat second. So, what turned me? Not the political issues expressed by any of the Dem presidential candidates. I don't profess to be politically astute or correct. Another source I deeply respect piqued my Union and Dem conscience. That is; how can Bernie Sanders run on the Democratic presidential primary ballot when he's not a Democrat? He's a registered Independent. He's not a dues-paying member of the Democratic Party. That begs my question that; How is it that I MUST be a dues-paying member of the Party to be eligible to hold county Dem Party office, and Bernie Sanders isn't held to the same Party rule? It's a straightforward question I've raised with the Michigan Democratic Party that re-

mains unanswered at this writing. When, and if, I receive an explanation to this nagging question, I'll reassess where I stand regarding the Democratic candidates in the March 8, 2016 presidential primary election in Michigan.

On a completely separate issue, not intended to stir controversy, but to exercise my right as an APWU member to state a personal view; I firmly believe the APWU N.E.B. endorsement of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I) in the Democratic primary election is a colossal mistake. There, I've said it! Let the slings and arrows fly. The basis for this is not politically motivated. I've a long-held belief that it's bad policy for an organization, county or State Party, or Union to endorse any Dem candidate in a contested primary election at any level. Upon voters deciding the Democratic nominee, then that candidate should get our full support. I've witnessed the consequences of ill-advised Labor endorsements of Dem candidates in primary contests in our own state; i.e. David Bonior vs. Jennifer Granholm for Governor, and its consequences. Granholm held organized labor at arm's length throughout her tenure.

It's been intimated that not to endorse is a lack of courage. I say discretion is the better part of valor. It's a matter of political wisdom and responsible leadership. My experience is that the possible consequences aren't worth the risk to the organization or Union representing a membership should the endorsed candidate not prevail in the Dem primary. Don't think for one minute that the eventual winners don't remember who endorsed their opponents. The very verbiage of the APWU official announcement indicates the N.E.B. endorsement of Sanders was not unanimous despite what I would wager was considerable debate, if not arm-twisting. To make it clear; this is not to criticize any Local, other Unions, or organizations who made a similar endorsement where I have no standing. None of my business. I also want to

make it perfectly clear that my position is not to be construed as a reflection on Sen. Sanders. I would be stating the same position if APWU would have endorsed Hillary Clinton or Gov. O'Malley in the presidential primary. However, the bell has been rung.

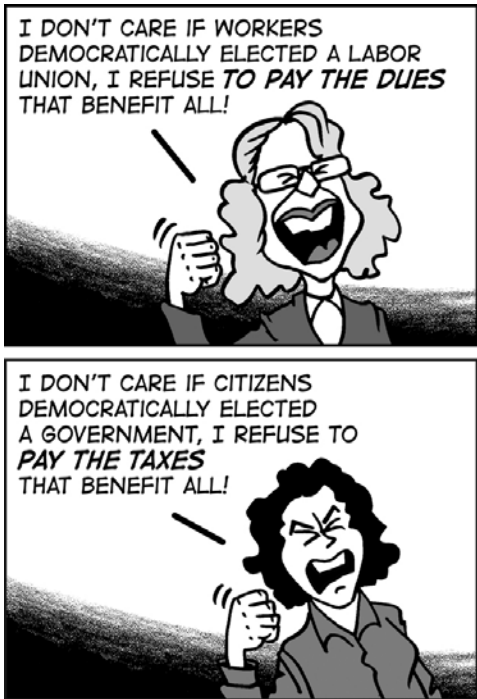
Now that I've once again placed myself squarely in the crosshairs; it's fair to say that this is the craziest presidential campaign I've witnessed since before my first eligibility to vote for JFK. The vile, offensive rhetoric from supposed GOP front runners is so far beyond the pale that I shudder to think there's even the remotest possibility one of the alleged top tier GOP candidates could be their eventual nominee. It should scare the Hell out of any reasonable thinking person, regardless of political stripe. It's globally embarrassing. Even the Parliament of Great Britain debated barring Trump from entering their country. Even those opposed to barring "The Donald" concurred he's repugnant, among other unflattering descriptive adjectives, but defended his right to free speech, just as we do. I can only speculate about what our enemies' take is. The constant glut of TV (so-called "news") featuring GOP candidates ad nauseam literally turns my stomach. Speech; loaded with racism, sexism, bordering on fascism, a GOP candidate who comes off like the infamous Sen. Joe McCarthy. For the younger member; McCarthy led the communist witch hunts of the '50's that destroyed lives. I've given the other side too much credence here. Whomever they end up with, we have to gird ourselves for the battle of our political lives.

"HECK OF A JOB GOVERNOR!" Shades of hurricane Katrina! Elections have consequences. I'm angry beyond description over my hometown Flint's disastrous poisonous water situation. It's all over national TV News. It's a total embarrassment, not to mention arguably criminal. We elected Gov. Snyder (R) who appointed the emergency manager which usurped the authority of the City of Flint's elected officials. The emergency manager is directly responsible for the ill-conceived decisions leading to this incredibly disastrous consequence to 'save money.' Would Flint's elected officials have made the same unconscionable decisions, including cover-up at the risk of its citizens? One can only speculate. What we do know is that the damage to personal property, its values, Flint's water infrastructure, and far and away most horrendous is the cost in human damage, especially to children and the elderly, and who knows who else who were exposed. Most of my immediate Family live in the area, work and attend college in Flint. Countless friends which include my home Local Sisters and Brothers working at the Main P.O. and stations.

all those culpable not only should be subject to prosecution, but made to drink and shower in Flint water before being slapped into prison! I know . . . that's an emotional expression of outrage, but fitting in my view. An aspect that's somewhat disturbing is where have our "friends" been, given this has been a known issue for months? I've only seen 5th District Rep. Dan Kildee interviewed once on TV outside of Flint area stations, so it's difficult for me to comment on the depth of his involvement to intervene. Rep. Kildee has received a lot of national TV coverage over his very commendable efforts to obtain the release of the former U.S. Marine Flint native held hostage in Iran. I pray Kildee will be using his political capital to keep Flint's agony in front of media, and exert his good office to the fullest extent to lobby the Obama administration for whatever it will take to remedy this horrendous situation. Federal funding should be no object! Now, Gov. "Snidely" has the gall to declare that the State doesn't have the money to fix the problem he and his emergency manager created, so he's appealed to the Obama Administration for funding. It's difficult to see light at the end of this dark tunnel anytime soon. I fear it will fade from public view and memory just like Katrina.

H.R. 711 - The Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act, introduced by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX), would reduce the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) penalty for CSRS retirees who are Social Security eligible due to having worked under S.S. with significant earnings for 40 quarters, or more. Simply put; CSRS retirees reaching age 62 or older eligible for S.S. benefits are reduced by a complicated 40% factor which translates to about 40% of what they would receive if it were not for WEP. This bill doesn't eliminate, but proposes to reduce the penalty by about 50%. Hey, better than a sharp stick in the eye! It's up to all of us, especially those CSRS retirees adversely affected by WEP, to take full advantage of this republican introduced bill by the Chairman of the House Ways & Means Committee. It might actually might have a chance of passage! Need I say; contact your Member of Congress pronto?

REQUIEM - Sincere condolences are extended to Brother Darren Joyce, MPWU and Flint Area Local Secretary-Treasurer, and the Joyce Family on the recent passing of his beloved Father, James. We likewise extend our deepest sympathies to the Family of Sister Velma Chism, President of the Ohio State Retiree Chapter, and Cleveland Local Chapter, on her recent, unexpected passing. "Eternal rest grant unto them O' Lord, and let Perpetual Light shine upon them. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen."



Snyder, his emergency manager, and Be Strong!

2016 Michigan State Retiree Chapter 8th Biennial Constitutional Convention

Friday, May 20, 2016

Causeway Bay Hotel and Conference Center, Lansing, MI

MPWU STATE RETIREE CHAPTER CONVENTION CALL

The 8th Biennial Constitutional Convention of the State Retiree Chapter, Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, will convene on Friday, May 20, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. at the Causeway Bay Hotel and Conference Center in Lansing, Michigan, in conjunction with the 25th 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 19, 2016, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.; Friday, May 20, 2016, 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Hotel Reservations: \$91.00 (plus applicable taxes (6% state sales tax and 7% county assessment))

Causeway Bay Hotel and Conference Center; 6820 S. Cedar Street; Lansing, MI 48911; Phone: (517) 694-8123. Be sure to tell/mention to reservations that you are with "Group - MPWU51716" to receive the proper room 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: Everyone will be on their own for meals. State Retiree Chapter E-Board officers' meal expenses will be included in their per diem, beginning with Wednesday dinner, and ending with Saturday dinner.

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, May 20th. Elections of State Retiree Chapter officers will be conducted at 3:00 p.m., Friday, May 20th. Election results will be announced prior to adjournment on Friday, May 20, 2016.

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: allab1937@gmail.com. Local Retiree Chapter credential cards are to be filled out showing both the name of the delegate and Local Retiree

Chapter represented. Credentials must be typed or printed and signed by the Local Retiree Chapter President and Secretary, or Secretary-Treasurer. Green Cards should be furnished to the delegates for exchange with the Credentials Committee in Lansing when registering. Return the Blue Card to: MPWU Sec.-Treas., Darren Joyce; P.O. Box 1124; Flint, MI 48501, no later than April 15, 2016.

Resolutions: Resolutions intended to be submitted to the MPWU State Convention for consideration by the MPWU State Convention delegates, must be submitted through a Local Retiree Chapter's parent APWU Local for submission to, and received by MPWU State Exec.-Sec., Michael Long by April 15, 2016. 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, May 20, 2016.

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



by Vince
Nichols,
Area 10
Director

I have received a lot of calls on annual leave and choice vacation period for upcoming year 2016 for career clerks in small offices. I would like to take a moment to remind employees that for small offices the open period for submitting your annual leave picks runs from February 1, 2016 through February 15, 2016.

A choice vacation calendar should be placed on the employee bulletin board during this time frame. Please submit choices on a 3971 to your Postmaster and keep a copy, and place your name on the leave calendar for weeks of your choice selections. The Postmaster must post the final leave calendar by March 1, 2016. Your annual leave year, in which you make your leave selections, runs from April 1 through November 30, 2016. I remind you that this opportunity for leave is your choice. After February 15, it becomes incidental leave and it then becomes the choice of

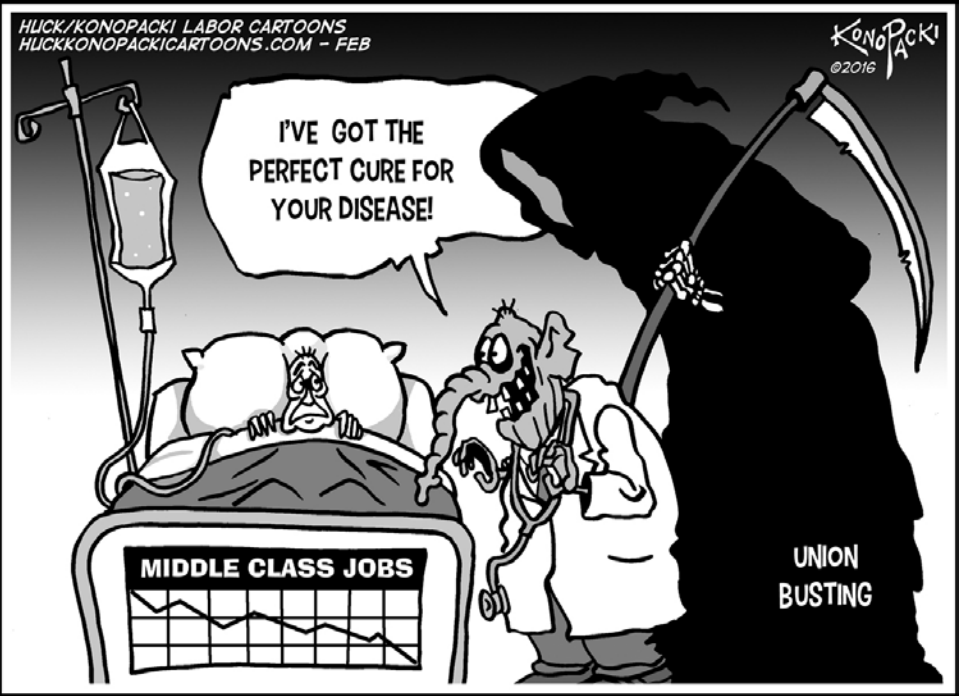
Area 10 Director

Annual Leave Selection

the Postmaster as to whether to grant the leave, so please remember to make your selections.

If you have any questions or if you believe your rights to your an-

nual leave are being violated by your Postmaster, please contact me ASAP. This has been a hard fought right you have earned through Union solidarity and strength, please take advantage of it.



Don't Spread Fear And Hate

by Paul Felton, Editor

Elsewhere in this issue there is a debate over who to support in the race for President of the United States.

This article, written around Christmas, talks about a dangerous proposal by one of the Republican candidates. That is, the proposal to ban all Muslims from entering the country.

This proposal comes from the same person who claimed Mexico was sending us rapists and criminals. To paint any religion or nationality with a broad brush like this is ignorant and hateful. You might say it's un-American.

I know, I know, it's a reaction to Paris and San Bernardino. But it's the wrong reaction. For three reasons.

First reason: it is discrimination. Holding all Muslims responsible for what a relative handful are doing is just plain wrong. It goes against our values. Even George W Bush after 9/11 cautioned against blaming all Muslims.

Second reason: it won't work. You know what the gun lobby says about banning guns – that only the criminals

would be armed if we did that? Well that applies here. If we decided to prevent all Muslims from entering our country, the people who want to do us harm would still find a way to get in. After all, you

Sometimes doing the right thing from a moral and humanitarian standpoint is also the best strategy.

can't tell a person's religion by looking at them. The people we would keep out are the vast majority of law-abiding people simply seeking a better life or perhaps fleeing intolerable circumstances.

Third reason: we'd be helping ISIS to recruit new terrorists, while driving away potential allies. ISIS is not a country or a specific area of land. It does control certain areas but it is more than that. It is an ideology – a twisted distortion of the religion of Islam. Ideologically, you might say it is the lunatic fringe of Islam. The leaders of ISIS want to convince impressionable youth that there is something “righteous” about killing Americans or westerners at random. The vast majority of the world's Muslims do not agree with ISIS.

Part of the struggle against ISIS is a battle for hearts and minds. ISIS wants to recruit other Muslims to the notion that America is evil. For the U.S. to lash out against all Muslims would give them a

recruiting tool. They would make it appear that America hates the religion of Islam.

At the same time, this would undercut the process of building alliances with the majority of Muslims who don't buy the twisted logic of ISIS. I mean this in two senses. One is countries that are predominantly Muslim whose leaders don't

agree with ISIS. They need to provide boots on the ground in this struggle. If we were to lash out against all Muslims trying to enter our country, these Muslim countries would be less likely to help.

The other point involves Muslims already living here. We can whip up an atmosphere of fear and hate towards them, or we can extend a hand of friendship and ask for their help. Both as eyes and ears within their communities and also in the way they raise their children. The religious leaders in the Muslim communities can play an important role. Why make it harder for them to help us?

Sometimes doing the right thing from a moral and humanitarian standpoint is also the best strategy. Sometimes, lashing out blindly simply plays into the hands of your enemy. This is one of those times.

— Six Words —

continued from page 8

down with disdain for the man from that day on. That is the perplexing thing about bigots, no matter who they may be, they fool you at first by walking upright, but eventually their true self always comes out, and it is never pretty.

Sociology studies have shown that people feel most comfortable and assimilate with others that most closely resemble themselves. However, this instinct has no bearing for thinking ill of those not similar. Growing up my father would often remind my twin sister and me how boring the world would be if everyone was exactly alike. Diversity is what makes life interesting, he reasoned...it should be embraced, not feared or rebuffed. In fact, whether one likes it or not, there is a demographic shift in this country that will result in a US population where the majority of Americans will be classified as non-white by the year 2043. As the Troubadour professed, “the times they are a changing.”

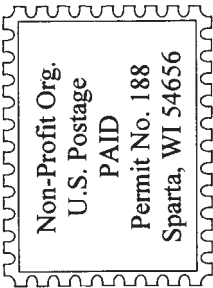
Dr. King so eloquently envisioned a time when content of character, not color of skin, became our only measure. Hopefully, we as a society, will realize sooner rather than later that the common ground of this great land is stronger than its divisive soil, and that all seeds sown from hate will inevitably wither on the vine if left untended. Unfortunately, societal change moves at a snail's pace and must evolve singularly, but eventually racial cohesion will imbue America. When that day arrives, collectively, we will look back with regret that we did not move with greater haste. Issues so contentious today will one day

seem archaic. Begging the question, how will future generations judge our conduct? Undoubtedly, the actions of today will be tomorrow's legacy.

Michelle Norris and her “Six Word Race Card Project” sparked another discussion on the seemingly never ending topic of race relations in this country. Whether it be Ferguson, the Simpson verdict or an NFL team in Washington, DC (for the record, in my opinion, changing the team name to the Warriors actually has a better ring to it), we remain entrenched in debates drawn along racial lines that should have been resolved long ago. The past is irrefutable and also irreversible. The mistakes of history are to be learned, not relived. Our focus must be beyond an obvious difference and fixed on what unites us all . . . our humanity!

The recent firestorm over the leader of the N.A.A.C.P. in Spokane, Rachel Dolezal, and her misrepresenting herself could have been avoided had Ms. Dolezal simply done what I have done most of my life. On any questionnaire where race is asked, my answer is precise. There are always the standard inquiries and corresponding boxes to mark . . . black, white, Asian, Hispanic or Native American as well as a box labeled “Other” accompanied by a blank space to provide an answer. That is the box I always check, while writing in the word HUMAN . . . I figure that is the only race that matters!

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; Only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate;
Only love can do that.”
Dr. King — Strength to Love, 1963
-reprinted from Front Lines-



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