

# Michigan MESSENGER

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## PRESIDENT



by  
**Michael  
Mize**

# Report From National Convention

away from the officers. The resolution set for actions to take place if there was an issue with the fund not having enough monies in it.

While opposing sides may not have been totally satisfied with the end result it worked out for the best and moved the APWU forward. We as a Union fight and negotiate all the time and in this situation and many others that we debate at the Convention the negotiation was with our brothers and sisters. The point is the delegates and officers worked through the issue and we moved forward in a positive way.

Of course this is a very brief look at the options prior to the Convention the alternate resolution and my opinion. I am willing to discuss this more in detail if anyone wishes, just let me know.

Now I want to take a moment to share a personal privilege that I had as the President from Flint.

One of the speakers at the Convention was Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. I have meet her before dealing with the water crisis in Flint, she is the Dr. that stood up to the Government to fight for the rights of the Flint Community. There is no way I can express in words how



**MPWU President Mike Mize and Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha.**

much of an outstanding person she is. In my opinion those of us that have been touched by her life or actions are better for it. She is just a pleasure to be around and cares for the Community so much, especially the children.

I had the pleasure of presenting a motion to make her an honorary member of the APWU. Her ties to labor and caring heart really made that a no brainer and it passed quickly. I welcome Dr. Mona to our humble ranks.

Then a motion came to the floor to pass a box for collections to be donated to the Flint Community for the crisis. I

was out of the room completing an interview during the period that the collection made it around and was counted.

Brothers and Sisters when I was told the count I had a hard time holding back the tears of joy. The delegates out of their own pockets donated \$12,000.00.

I have said this many times in the last year and must say this again. This is the most awesome and fantastic organization to be involved in and it is my great pleasure to represent Flint and the MPWU. The Union Officials and members of this organization are the best and I thank you all.

Well the National Convention has come and went. There was some highly debated issues, some debates on the floor and some that started before and carried on into the Convention. One of the big items discussed was the Officers Retirement Plan (ORP).

There were two resolutions prior to the Convention on the ORP. Our last issue had information concerning the plan from a great friend and retired leader from Michigan. The resolutions on the table at the beginning of the Convention lacked the support and in general did not fairly correct the current ORP.

The first resolution would change the ORP to a 401k. Which in a sense would be like our TSP. Many had problems with this as Unions should do and be at the front of benefits not the rear. Unions fight to have a defined benefit retirement so one is guaranteed a pension in retirement and not at risk in the stock market. We as a Union in my opinion should provide a fair retirement to the officers and a defined benefit plan is fair. The problem that was presented is the cost to these plans to the membership.

The second resolution was to not add funds to the plan for two years and evaluate the position of the fund in two years. This was thought to be possible as the fund is in great shape at the current time. Even with the fund in good shape waiting two years in my opinion would not be wise. Additionally, there should be no reason to not add the fair and proper amount of funds to the plan every year.

I personally was very proud of the APWU when the alternative resolution came forward. Things were set to be a very heated battle on the two original resolutions and unfortunately sometimes we don't agree and we get upset with each other. The alternate resolution placed protection to the membership if there were to be funding issues in the ORP. It requires a fair payment be made, no more, no less. It also left the current structure of the plan in place so no benefits were taken

**NEW!**

# Young Workers Committee









HUMAN RELATIONS DIRECTOR



by  
Keith  
Combs

# National Reassessment Process

In recent years many employees have asked the question, what is going to happen in regard to how we were treated by management in the National Reassessment Process (NRP)? Well for all of those years the Union has argued that the United States Postal Service discriminated against injured workers and violated their rights under the Rehabilitation Act.

Recently an Administrative Judge (AJ) agreed and found that under the program named NRP managers violated employees by:

- Improperly disclosed medical information. The USPS failed to require redaction of employee's medical information.

- Failed to provide reasonable accommodations. Management determined that partial or full-time work was not available and sent employee's home or to new assignments.

- Engaged in disparate treatment against employees who were injured on duty. The USPS marked these workers and sought to compel them to retire.

- Harassed injured workers and created a hostile work environment.

It was the Postal Service that implemented NRP as a pilot program in 2006 and expanded it nationwide in 2009. All employees who had limitations because of workplace injuries were targeted. NRP protocol required "reassessment" of medical restrictions and job offers. Postal officials then decided if the work being performed was "operationally necessary."

Many workers in all crafts who

were working in modified assignment were reassessed in 2006 and stripped of their duties. Many APWU injured members suffered because of the program; they were told there was no operationally necessary work available to accommodate their medical restrictions. They were ordered to go home or they were afforded fewer work hours despite previously accepting a medically suitable job offer.

The lead counsel for the case is emphasizing that the decision does not guarantee the class members personal relief. The USPS appealed the decision, stalling the individual claim process, which cannot begin until the appeal process is complete. If the decision is upheld, it could cost the USPS hundreds of millions of dollars if the EEOC justly awards class member on the basis of their actual losses.

We anticipate that the Postal Service will argue employees were not treated improperly or personally harmed by

NRP in an effort to limit its looming liability.

There's no way to forecast how damages will be calculated, but to ready themselves, class members may find it beneficial to itemize the value of their losses and begin gathering supporting documentation. For example, affected workers could document the difference between their postal salary and wage-loss compensation and/or annuity; lost leave; TSP contributions and matching funds; overtime opportunities; creditable service time, and the difference in premiums charged at the federal rate rather than the postal rate for Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FGLI).

A statement of Benefits can be obtained by writing to OWCP and OPM.

Until next time remember to never give up on your dreams, with patience your dreams will become your reality.

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT



by  
Michael  
O'Hearn

# Fire Safety

Fires cause more than 3,800 deaths every year. It also causes more than 18,300 injuries every year. Deaths and injuries from fires in the workplace should be preventable.

Every postal facility should have a fire safety program. Ask management in your office for a copy of the fire safety program so you can check it out. You can then see if the program is being followed. Most of the time management is not following the program. Some of the features of the program should include never blocking exit doors or locking them in a way that prevents exiting in the case of an emergency.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York in 1911 caused 146 deaths. This was the most horrific industrial fire ever in the USA. The factory was on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the building. The doors were locked and barred so that the employees could not get out. Trapped by the fire many of the young women working there jumped to their doom because of the locked doors.

Always, always, always have clear exits so that employees in an emergency can get out.

- Fire alarms should be regularly tested.

- A record of this should be available for review.

- Fire extinguishers should be regularly tested.

Again, a record of this should be available for review.

There should be a clear path to the fire extinguishers and the wall should have a big sign indicating where the extinguishers are.

There should be at least one emergency evacuation drill every year on every tour.

One time the fire alarm went off in my Post Office. It was in the middle of the night. The lights went off and the emergency lighting came on. The supervisor yelled out for everyone to keep throwing mail. This was a long time ago. I was young and foolish. We obeyed the supervisor. The alarm was a test conducted by the local fire department. Needless to say we failed that test. We had to do random drills every month for the next year.

- When the alarms go off, quickly and safely get out of the building.

- Are escape routes posted

throughout the building?

- Is there an evacuation team to assist with the safe evacuation and to count up the people that have evacuated to be sure everyone is out of the building?

These simple procedures will prevent most fire related deaths and injuries.

Fire safety is every person's responsibility.

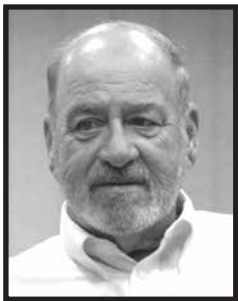
The life you save may be your own.



APWU Delegates are in total support of NO TPP during the convention.



BACK TO THE FUTURE



by  
Al  
LaBrecque

“Let them eat cake!” Mme. Marie Antoinette

VOTE! With the National Convention now history, the MOST IMPORTANT events we must turn our collective attentions to are the APWU national officer’s election, and the Presidential election. APWU election ballots are being mailed in mid-September. The Presidential election is November 8th. VOTE your APWU ballot mailed directly to your home with a postage paid return envelope to VOTE for national Union officers! Retiree members will receive a ballot to VOTE for APWU President, Executive Vice-President, (Sec.-Treas. uncontested), Legislative/Political Director, Director APWU Health Plan, (Dir. Human Relations uncontested), and Director APWU Retirees Department. VOTE on November 8th your choice for President (is there a “choice”?), and the all important down ticket offices for Congress, State & local offices. It’s imperative that working people elect the non-partisan Michigan Supreme Court Justices; Debbie Thomas (I), & Frank Szymanski! Take a voter’s guide with you to the polls. It’s legal. SENIORS; VOTE by “Absentee Ballot”! Request a Sec. of State application from your City, County, or Township Clerk, and DO IT NOW! There’s NO excuse for anyone not to VOTE! “If you don’t

VOTE for who or what you want, don’t complain about who or what you get!”

CONVENTION COMMENTS: MPWU State Retiree Chapter President/Central Region National Retiree Delegate. Paul Browning will relate his views of the National Convention herein, so I will only touch on some critical highlights where I had a considerable investment. The “Let them eat cake” quote that came out of the French Revolution sums up the incredibly vociferous statements on the convention floor by delegates opposed to Resolutions proposing Constitutional amendments relating to retiree initiatives. “Let ‘em pay full dues!” “Let ‘em skip a car payment”, “Let ‘em take out a loan”, were some of the decidedly crude and provocative responses to Resolutions benefiting the Retirees Dept. and members who pay “only” \$36 per year. Of an estimated 40,000 APWU Retirees Dept. members; about 450 pay full dues. Many are retired national officers, some still in office, full-time Local & State Union officers who receive compensation, and some retirees who have their per capita paid by their Local, thus they’re “full” dues-paying members. Never mind that the some 39,500 \$36 retired members paid “full dues” longer than most of those who oppose anything remotely resembling retired member involvement in the Union we retirees built! I’ve one word for those ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ (including an elected national officer); “SHAME!”

One out of six ain’t bad! Actually, the Retiree’s pre-Convention Conference decided to prioritize Constitutional amendment Resolutions by importance; #1 Representation Art. 6., and

#2. Art. 11. Sec. 2. (I), National Retiree Delegates authorized to attend the All-Craft APWU Retirees Dept. Conferences with necessary expenses. Although the Representation Res. failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds, debate was passionate, and it garnered a near simple majority which was far greater than expected. Now that the issue has been brought to the fore to provide a greater retired member, YES \$36 dues-paying retired member delegate representation in APWU Conventions, it will remain a priority for future conventions. However, our #2 priority Res. to pay “necessary expenses” for the 5 elected Regional Retiree Delegates to the All-Craft WAS adopted and added to the APWU Constitution! A victory!

That I authored that Res. is especially satisfying and settles a long-standing issue. To toot my own horn; it represents the 9th amendment to an APWU Constitution Article or Section, in whole or part, that I have authored. Of course the two I’m most proud of are; to ELECT rather than appoint our Retirees Dept. Director, and eligibility for Retirees Dept. members to VOTE for seven (7) APWU national officers. One would expect that I might be satisfied with that. There’s more, much more to be accomplished beginning with retired member Representation; a greater voice and vote in Convention on resolutions and debates directly affecting the 40,000 retired members. We’ll be back despite the harsh opposition heaped on proponents of retiree inclusion. On that you can rest assured!

Revealing and uplifting was support for retiree initiatives from the

young member delegates, the future of APWU leadership and Union Involvement, who seem to identify with similar internal issues. It is in that vein that I hope to mentor this generation of APWU leadership who I invite to study all sides of our initiatives. I’ll get into greater depth as we digest the effects of the just concluded Convention and get past the APWU and Nov. national, state, and local elections. “The ancient wisdom of Pericles still applies today; “You may not be interested in politics, but politics is interested in you.”

I was beyond pleased for Brother, Byron C. Denton, Western Region Retire Representative (a.k.a. “Delegate”, Liz), who received the recognition on the Convention floor that he so richly deserves. I may have authored those nine amendments to the APWU Constitution, but it was Byron’s eloquent debate on the floor mic’s that put many of them over the required 2/3 majority approval. We were a team since being the first elected “Original Five” Retiree Delegates to the ‘96 Convention. I admire this 88 year-old Marine, a Purple Heart vet of the Korean War, the Inchon landing and the horrific Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. Byron remains sharp as a tack, an ability to think on his feet, and never scripted on the mic. It all comes from Byron’s Union heart and soul. As president of the small La Mesa, CA APWU Local, he ‘made his bones’ as the leader of the powerful small Local caucus in California which earned him the (sometimes reluctant) respect of APWU leadership through years leading to his retirement. Byron’s wisdom and leadership is legend, and will be missed but not forgotten. I’ve a sneaking suspicion there’s still some advice and input left in both of us!



**'The most important medication I can prescribe for Flint is to lift our families out of poverty... Being in a union family can buffer children from any adversity.'**

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha  
Pediatrician,  
Hero of the Flint Water Crisis



I’ve just got to address something that’s been deeply disturbing, and that’s the uncontested election and re-elections of the Eastern Region Retiree Delegate from Pittsburgh, who has been appointed to the past two Constitution Committees, who vigorously opposes every retiree related resolution both in Committee and on the Convention floor. Yes, it’s been described as “Nuts!”. This is a guy who describes retiree initiatives as “empire building”. This is the guy who tried unsuccessfully to slip in an improperly submitted resolution to increase Retirees Dept. member’s dues \$4 per month! Retiree members of his Pittsburgh retiree chapter, retiree members of the Eastern Region states he “represents”, and that active and retiree members across APWU need to be made aware: This guy doesn’t represent retiree best interests, just his own agenda whatever that may be! Following the ‘14 Convention where I angrily confronted him on the floor over his particularly provoking statements on the mic, I eventually wrote him an apology for my unnecessary, profane outburst, extending an ‘olive branch’ as a Union

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RETIREE PRESIDENT

• • •



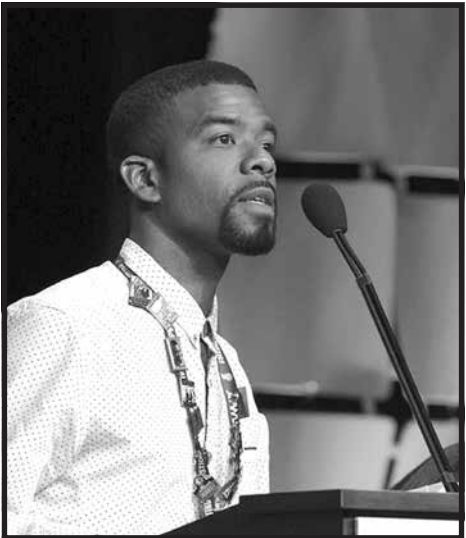
by  
Paul  
Browning

# It Was No Picnic

Orlando, F - Central Florida in mid-August is like Northern Michigan in mid-February, you pretty much avoid going outside. Nonetheless, 170 APWU Retirees came to Disney World for our two day Retiree Conference which was followed by the four days APWU National Convention with over 2100 delegates.

I was privileged to attend both as one of the five (5) National Convention Retiree Delegates allotted by the APWU Constitution. The five delegates represent 40,000 members of the APWU Retirees Department. (I know, 5 out of 2100 sure doesn't seem like much.) Numerous back and forth outdoor treks from building to building in the 95 degree heat and 90% humidity without at least a little breeze made for a bit of a chore in this beautiful location that was somewhat alleviated by the 83 degree night time temperatures.

Business at the Retiree Conference was brisk as our members must continue to alternately demand and beg for recognition and equality for our decades of service and all the years we paid full dues as opposed to our now \$36 a year-hey, even the Government gives me a break on my taxes when I retire. We are retired now and without the need of the grievance/arbitration procedure or National Contract negotiations. It's why we have one (1) National Officer compared to the seventy-five (75) National Officers for still working members. Still, tens of thousands retirees continue to pay the greatly reduced dues, work in the political and social arenas to maintain the USPS and APWU as viable entities for the good of all and we are proud



Courtney CJ Jenkins, from the Baltimore MD Local, one to Young Member leaders was supportive of the resolutions that Paul had presented.

to declare ourselves members of the American Postal Workers Union.

Retirees at the Conference overwhelming approved six APWU Constitution resolutions/amendments to be sent to the National Convention floor for debate and vote. 1) These concerned raising the fee non-APWU enrollees pay to belong to the APWU Health Plan, 2) placing the Retirees Department Director on the Executive Board of the Health Plan as well as, 3) the APWU National Executive Board, 4) raising the salary of the Retirees Director commensurate with that of the Directors of the Clerk, Motor Vehicle, and Maintenance Crafts, 5) approving several thousands of dollars in expenses (no salary) for the 5 retiree convention delegates to attend the off year All Crafts/Retiree Conference (where educational classes and meetings are held concerning items from Medicare/Social Security, political and social issues, APWU Retiree rights, and give retirees the only opportunity nationwide to communicate on such) and a final resolution which I personally wrote raising, 6) Retiree Representation on the National Convention floor from 5 out of 2100 to perhaps maybe



Paul presenting one of the Retiree resolutions on the floor of the convention.

a hundred or so more. It sounds fair enough after all our years of contributing to our Union and still doing so.

I spoke forcefully a number of times on a National Convention floor microphone. (It was always mike #8, the Michigan delegation was seated at the very back of the hall.) The only resolution that passed was the Retiree expenses for the off year conference. While I was extremely disappointed and chagrined that the representation amendment failed, it was somewhat encouraging to attain at least close to a majority vote especially afterwards when more than one person told me they thought it would be resoundingly defeated. For some reason there is a "disconnect" between many "full dues paying" members", including a very very small minority of retirees who can afford to pay full dues and more power to them I say for being able to do so. And strangely enough, that "disconnect" is almost all among still working members who hopefully will be in retirees' shoes some day. However, we will be back in 2018 at the National Convention in Pittsburgh, home of a scoundrel who uses patriotism as his last refuge. As great and unselfish retirees like Al LaBrecque and Byron Denton taught

us, it's a slow process to amend the APWU Constitution but it can work and we will always work in any capacity we are able to for the good of our Union.

On a very positive note, Convention delegates passed resolutions for more contractual rights for the deprived PSE's. Also resolutions empowering "young workers" were passed. While I'm an old and still struggling retiree guy (I always say there is less b.s. when you retire but it doesn't go completely away) I do remember well the working anywhere from under 30 to over 50 hours a week in six days as a PTF for five years. I know what I wanted then as a young worker and I want the same for today's young workers. At one point I spoke with a young delegate from Baltimore who expressed deep appreciation for all the APWU members who had come before him and worked to attain a decent working class job for postal employees. We gave mutual thanks to each other and I hope there are many more activists like him out there. Thanks again Brother.

Postscript-my personal endorsements for those National APWU Officers that retirees can vote for based on my knowledge of their of accomplishments and ability:

- Retiree Dept. Director - Joe Gordon
- Legislative Director - Judy Beard
- Health Plan Director - John Marcotte
- Vice President - Debbie Szeredy
- In Solidarity.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

*continued from page 4*  
Brother. I don't regret making the effort at amends, just the obvious brushing aside of what he considered as weakness by once again demonstrating his disdain for his fellow 4 National Retiree Delegates and proposed initiatives. "Disgusting" was the assessment of one delegate. Agreed, Sister!

On the positive side was the support of delegates, our Michigan delegates in particular, and the support on the floor mic of our former Retirees' Dept. Director, Judy Beard, who spoke eloquently on a retiree Resolution. I've receive a lot of positive feedback from those who were in Orlando in praise of our own Paul Browning who spoke several times on Resolutions. Byron Denton credits Paul's timing, presentation, and forceful debate for the successful adoption of the Res. to pay necessary expenses of the five elected National Retiree Delegates to All-Craft Conferences (that unfortunately includes the

Eastern Region provocateur).

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the outpouring of support for my devastated hometown of Flint, MI by APWU leadership and delegates who raised some \$26+K for the Hurley Hospital Children's Developmental Center, and inviting the courageous Dr. Hanna who was instrumental in alerting the damage to children poisoned by lead in the water caused by the political decisions of those appointed by State government and their minions. As a son of Flint, I extend my deep gratitude to everyone who contributed and stood to recognize Dr. Hanna's courageous actions on behalf of Flint's harmed children and adults. God Bless! So, how did I know what went down in Orlando? Well, I was in nearly constant phone contact with either Brothers Browning or Denton over the 6 days of pre-Convention Conference and Convention, almost as if I was there. I was in spirit!

One of these columns WILL be devoted to mentoring. I'm encouraged that retirees and our so-called 'under-35 young' members and rising leaders of the APWU have a lot in common, and even more that together we can continue to build a more perfect Union that respects the past as well as today and the future for every member; whether PSE, NTFT, PTF, Full-Time Career, or Retired! In the meantime, I'm very much looking forward to reading the verbatim 2016 Convention Proceedings when posted on the APWU website, specifically the Constitution Committee Report and delegates who rose to speak both for and against retiree Resolutions and their statements. There's a lot to be learned from the mindset of the pro and con debate going forward. Finally, a sincere Thank You to "Blues" Brother Paul Browning who worked tirelessly to represent retiree initiatives. A job well done, Brother!

Solidarity Forever!



VETERAN'S DIRECTOR

Veterans' News



by  
John P.  
Smeekens

VETERANS' SUICIDE

The Veterans Health Administration has released new data about veterans' suicides, based upon examination of over 55 million veteran records from 1979 to 2014, from every state in the nation and U.S. territories. Since 2001, U.S. adult civilian suicides increased 23 percent while veteran suicides increased 32 percent during the same period. From these more current data, the VA has also determined that veterans take their lives at the rate of 20 per day. Of these 20 veterans, 6 were in the care of the VA for at least one year prior to their death; the other 14 were not. However, 65 percent of all veterans who died from suicide in 2014 were 50 years of age or older. In fact, 45 percent of veteran suicides in 2014 were aged 60 and older. Also disturbing is that suicide in the 18- to 29-year-old veteran cohort is steadily increasing, as is the number of women veterans who do not utilize VA services, but who take their own lives. In another not-unexpected note, 66 percent of all veteran suicides involve the use of a firearm. Some of the questions that should be asked are; how many were homeless; how many had job problems; how many had relationship problems; how many had financial problems; how many had health problems??? There's been an awful large amount of money spent on research as to why there have been so many Veterans suicides. **WE**, and I do mean **WE! ALL OF US!** Need to reach

out to our Veterans, our families, our friends, and help to prevent suicide in as many instances as possible.

The Crisis Line Number for Veterans' is; **1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1 or TEXT 838255**

CAMP LeJEUNE VETERANS

The VA has issued a final rule to expand VA health care eligibility for veterans affected by contaminated drinking water at Camp LeJeune. Veterans who served at least 30 days at Camp LeJeune from August 1, 1953 through December 31, 1987, are eligible to receive no-cost health care for 15 medical conditions that have been linked to the contaminated water. Previously, only veterans who served at Camp LeJeune from January 1, 1957 were covered. Veterans who have been diagnosed with any of the 15 medical conditions may receive reimbursement for the cost of treatment if the care was provided on or after December 16, 2014, when the law expanding eligibility was signed.

However, veterans must submit a request for reimbursement no later than July 18, 2018. For more information on benefits and services for Camp Lejeune veterans, visit:  
<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune>.

This rule does not impact disability compensation benefits. VA is still in the process of finalizing a rule to grant Camp LeJeune veterans presumptive disability compensation for 8 of the 15 medical conditions found to be associated with exposure to the contaminated water at

Camp LeJeune. However, veterans who have been diagnosed with any of the 15 conditions should file a claim as soon as possible to help preserve the effective date.

VE-HEROeS

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study. This study will be a national study on the health and well being of Vietnam Veterans, including Blue Water Navy Veterans, as well as Veterans who served elsewhere during the Vietnam Era from 1961 through 1975, and similarly aged American counterparts.

Beginning this fall, VA will invite approximately 43,000 Vietnam and Vietnam Era veterans, and approximately 11,000 members of the general U.S. population to participate in VE-HEROeS. The study involves a questionnaire for everyone and a medical records review for a smaller group of participants. VA encourages those invited to participate in the study.

FEDERAL LEAVE FOR DIS-ABLED VETERANS

OPM has announced a new transition benefit for disabled veterans hired by the federal government after **Nov. 5, 2016**. The policy will provide new employees up to 104 hours of leave for medical treatment within their first year of employment on qualified service-connected disability ratings of 30 percent or more. The new leave policy is being implemented under the *Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015*.

Beth Cobert, acting Director of OPM has said that "We want these veterans to have sufficient leave during their first year of federal service in order to take care of any medical issues related to their service-connected disability." Get more information by going to;  
<https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2016-18516.pdf>

FREE FLU SHOTS

Beginning now, through March 31, 2017, all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system can receive free flu shots at any Walgreens or Duane Reade pharmacy.

This joint outreach health initiative is designed to help serve veterans closer to where they reside. Veterans must bring their VA identification cards with them, as well as another photo ID, and complete a short four-question application, which will be used to automatically update their VA Electronic Health Records. No appointments are necessary. And while you're there, don't forget to say, **"THANKS FOR SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS."**

VA WOMENS CHAT LINE

The VA's Women Veterans Call Center is expanding its outreach to women veterans with a new online, one-to-one chat function. The new service enables women veterans to go online and anonymously chat via real-time text messaging with trained representatives, all of whom are women and many of whom are veterans themselves.

The new chat feature, which is open extended hours Monday through Saturday, provides another avenue for women veterans to ask general questions about benefits, eligibility and services specifically related to them. To learn more go to;  
<http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/programoverview/wvcc.asp>

JEROME SILBERMAN

He was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 11, 1933. He graduated from Washington High School in Milwaukee in 1951 and received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Iowa in 1955. He was drafted into the Army on September 10, 1956, where he was assigned to the medical corps and trained at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. After training, he was assigned to the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at Valley Forge Army Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, where he worked as a paramedic. During those years he began taking acting classes at Herbert Berghof Studio in New York City. He was Honorably Discharged in 1958. In 1959, at the age of 26 he adopted the name **Gene Wilder** as his stage name.

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APWU National Convention



Local Presidents from Michigan with Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha.



— C O M M E N T A R Y —

# Americans Trust The Postal Service

by Fredric Rolando,  
President NALC

The U.S. Postal Service delivers 40 percent of the world's mail to 153 million U. S. homes and businesses from coast to coast, six and increasingly seven days a week. It's older than the country itself and is consistently rated the public's most-trusted federal agency.

And yet there are misconceptions about it that circulate in the media or on websites, as was the case in a recent commentary piece in Economics21. To advance its agenda — privatization — the article deprived the reader of relevant information while painting a misleading picture of postal finances, blaming the government and employees instead of the actual culprit.

Given the importance of the USPS

to residents and businesses throughout the country, I'd like to take this opportunity to offer some facts and some context.



For starters, the Postal Service is operating in the black, and has been since 2013. Its earned revenue exceeded operating expenses by more than a billion dollars apiece in both fiscal year 2014 and 2015. In just the first two quarters of FY 2016, the operating profit stands at \$1.8 billion — meaning that over the past two-and-a-half years, Postal Service operations are \$4.4 billion in the black.

After a significant decline in first-

class mail during the worst recession in 80 years, first class mail is stabilizing as the economy gradually improves. Meanwhile, Internet-sparked

online shopping has sent package delivery revenues skyrocketing. And so, overall revenue at USPS has been increasing for the past four years. Record worker productivity has played a role as well.

There is red ink, but it has nothing to do with the mail and everything to do with flawed public policy. In 2006, a lame-duck Congress mandated that the Postal Service pre-fund future retiree health benefits decades in advance. No other entity in the country, public or private, has to pre-fund these benefits for even one year. That mandate, costing \$5.6 billion annually, not only accounts for the red ink; it disguises the

actual profits postal operations have been generating for years. (It's important to note that this debit goes on the ledger each year as a loss, whether or not USPS can afford to pay it, thereby producing the 'red ink.')

Addressing this elephant in the room — pre-funding — is imperative because of the Postal Service's role in so many facets of American life, including in small towns and rural areas, where the post office often is the center of civic life.

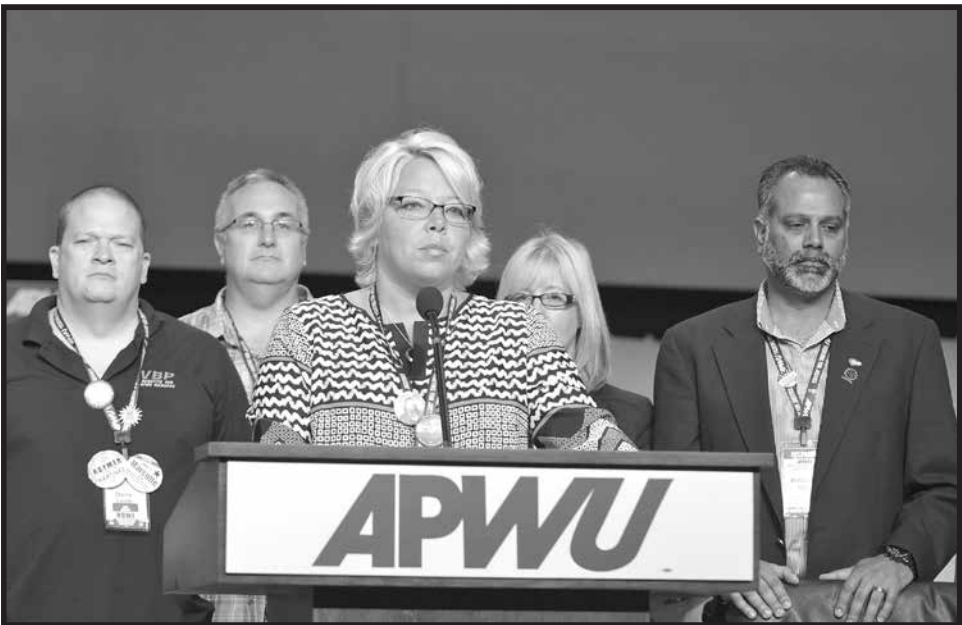
More broadly, the Postal Service is the centerpiece of the \$1.3 trillion national mailing industry, which employs 7.5 million Americans in the private sector.

It's also the nation's largest civilian employer of military veterans. Nearly one-quarter of letter carriers are wearing their second uniform.

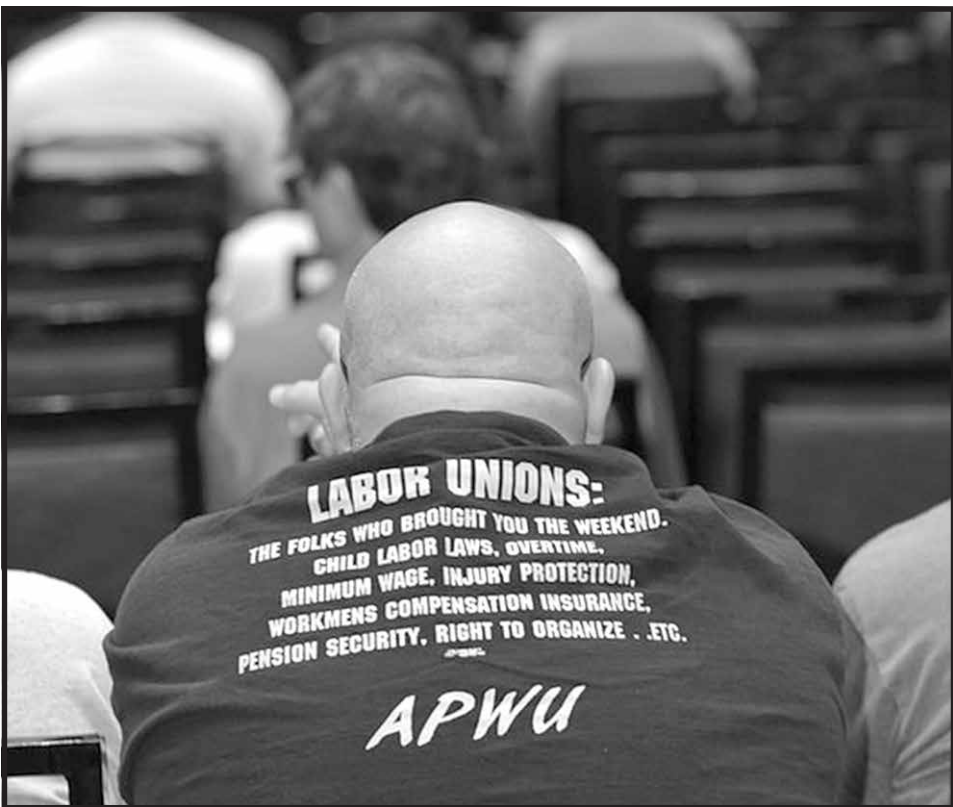
USPS and letter carriers play a key  
*continued on page 8*



Young Workers Committee being addressed by APWU National President Mark Diamondsten.



Amy Puhalski Local President for West Michigan Area Local presenting resolutions to the delegates.



## Veterans' News

*continued from page 6*

**FLAG RESPECT  
THOSE WHO WOULD  
DISRESPECT OUR FLAG,  
HAVE NEVER BEEN HANDED  
A FOLDED ONE!!!  
CONVENTION THOUGHTS**

Hi. It's me, John, your Veterans' Director. Just got back from our National A.P.W.U. Convention, as an Elected Delegate from the 480/481 Area Local. First, to all our Veterans out there, Jane was posted in the Men's room on Monday morning's start of the Convention, and was still in place at the end of the convention on Thursday night.

I've been a Delegate to many Conventions over the years, and it always amazes me how we can all be in the same organization, yet sometimes the votes are so close they actually have to bring people up on stage to confirm the outcome. This year's Convention was no different. We even had some disagreements amongst our own State. Other than the high cost of food, and it being so hot, it was a good Convention.

Don't get me wrong, it didn't all go smooth. There were ups and downs amongst many of the attendee's, but I think the final outcome will benefit all members of the A.P.W.U.



# A Real-Life Hero



Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha

One of the most memorable speeches was given by Dr. Mona Hanna-Attish, the pediatrician who exposed the Flint water crisis by proving that lead was poisoning the children of the impoverished city. For her efforts, she was vilified and labeled “an unfortunate researcher who was causing near hysteria.”

But the good doctor was not deterred. She advocated for the children and families of her city until the story pierced the consciousness of the nation.

“Flint did not always mean disaster,” she said. It was home to General Motors, the United Auto Workers union, and the great sit-down strike of the 1930s. Because of good union jobs, Flint had the highest per capita wages in the country, with great schools and hospitals.

It was the decline of the auto industry and Flint’s unions that led to decades of disinvestment, and ultimately to the austerity measures that poisoned the water, she pointed out.

“The most important medication I can prescribe for Flint is to lift our families out of poverty,” Hanna-Attish said. “Being in a union family can buffer children from any adversity.”

The APWU presented her with a \$10,000 check for the Flint Child and Health Development Fund. Delegates were so inspired by her remarks that they passed buckets for additional contributions and raised more than \$12,600! The Mott Foundation, based in Flint, matched the APWU’s contributions, bringing the total to \$50,000.

Delegates voted unanimously to induct Dr. Hanna-Attish as an Honorary Member of the APWU.

## Hundreds Protest Dakota Access Pipeline

APWU officers and staff were among hundreds protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline outside the White House on Sept. 13. The pipeline would carry crude-oil across four states from North Dakota to Illinois – passing through sacred Native American sites and under the Missouri River, the water supply of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. For the past month, thousands of protesters, including Native Americans from more than 100 tribes have protested the \$3.78 billion construction project. Protesters want to halt the project.



## Americans Trust The Postal Service

*continued from page 7*  
role in the quality of life of communities throughout the country. In mid-May, letter carriers conducted their 24th annual food drive — the largest single-day food drive in the country — collecting a record 80 million pounds of food from generous Americans to help replenish food banks, pantries and shelters from coast to coast.

Every day as they deliver mail on their routes, letter carriers around the country help save the elderly or other residents who have fallen or experienced medical problems, locate missing children, rescue people after automobile accidents or help stop crimes in progress.

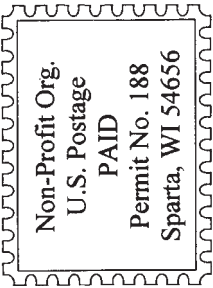
The Postal Service and letter carriers also play a role in national security. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, when President George W. Bush sought a way to protect Americans in the event of a bio-terror attack, he turned to the nation’s only universal delivery network, the U.S. Postal Service. Letter carriers have volunteered to be trained to stockpile and deliver medicines to every household in several major metropolitan areas within 48 hours of an attack, to save lives and avert panic. Just imagine what it would cost to set up such a program from scratch.

These are just some of the reasons why the Postal Service — based in the Constitution and first led by Benjamin Franklin — enjoys enthusiastic support from the public and from lawmakers across the political spectrum, including many conservatives.

If congressional representatives work toward constructive and targeted postal reform that addresses pre-funding while preserving and strengthening the invaluable and profitable postal networks, the Postal Service can continue to provide all Americans with the industrial world’s most affordable delivery services.

*Mr. Rolando is president of the National Association of Letter Carriers.*  
— Postal Wire

**DEADLINE**  
for articles for  
the next issue  
of the  
*Michigan  
Messenger*  
is Nov. 14, 2016



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