

Michigan MESSENGER

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



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P.R.E.S.I.D.E.N.T

— OverStaffed —



by
**Michael
Mize**

You are overstaffed!! Per Management!

Okay, I am certain that most of you would agree that is the craziest thing I have ever put in print. No, I do not believe that you are overstaffed. Management has their formula that in my opinion has been put together to eliminate jobs no matter the consequences to the office or the customer. Management is basing their information on what we consider a flawed, non-contractual, platform. They are using a program that calculates earned hours and positions from that. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be an accurate accounting of what happens in an office. It is also not we have agreed to in our contract which would require worked hours to be used.

The Union has done a good job so far of slowing this craziness down. Has it stopped? No, it has moved from smaller offices to the large offices and I expect we will see more of it again. We continue to fight for the positions we can and present arguments for all reasons to keep them.

I won't speak of every office that

I had a meeting for or that was cancelled. I want to point out one office that I had meeting for and what I believe we would all agree just does not make sense. The office, un-named, currently had two PTF's working in it. One of the PTF's was converted from a PSE within the last several months. The PTF hours average over 25 each per week. Management is looking to move one PTF to another office. This would require the other PTF to work over 50 hours a week or find other PTF's to borrow. We all know that can be difficult and the more staffing is cut the harder it is to find any help.

We pointed out all those issues and several others which we hope will lead to more changes in the Management proposal or cancellation of the impact to the office completely. But, I felt you as the

members in the offices should know that we are fighting these issues and doing everything we can to protect the positions in your offices. The small offices were the battleground in the first wave.



Pictured left to right are APWU President Mark Diamondsten and Roscoe Woods - MPWU Legislative Director and 480-481 President.

Now, why is this so important to tell you all about? First, to keep you informed and let you know we are fighting these battles for you. Second, you are our best source of information in your office. Right now, with the issues we face there has never been a more important time to keep our work. If a Manager is doing more work than they are allowed to do in your office we need you to keep notes on it and request a steward. We need the grievances filed. If we must fight these battles we can use the grievance pay outs and information to assist in our case. I may sit in my office and argue over every item but

the people that really know what an office situation is, well that is you. I do not want to see one person moved to an office that they do not want to go to. I know what this does to a family and how difficult it can be as my family has been through it. We may not win all the battles but with your help we will absolutely win more than we will win without your help.

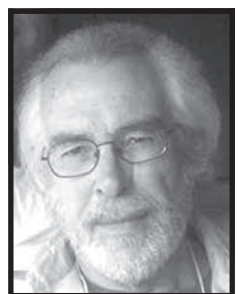
Stay strong sisters and brothers!!

Open Season

Open Season is coming up fast. Check all your items that can be adjusted and make the changes you need. Do not miss the opportunity and have to wait another year.

We will not suggest that we can tell you what the best insurance would be for anyone. We believe that everyone must look at all their specific information and make those decisions as it could be different for every person. What I will say is that I believe everyone should truly take a close look at the options. I know there are plenty of them and some are costlier than others. I would simply ask that when you compare everything before making a final decision look at the APWU Health Plan. While it probably won't work for everyone I can say that it does work for many of our members as well as myself. Again, just look and make your own decision.

R.E.T.I.R.E.E P.R.E.S.I.D.E.N.T



by
**Paul
Browning**

APWU Retiree Conference And The Insanity

Las Vegas, Oct 1, 2017 – The All Crafts/Retiree Conference was proceeded by a Legislative Conference conducted on Sunday by APWU Legislative Director Judy Beard and two of her able staffers who work the halls of Congress tirelessly getting support for postal employees and retirees. In an age of confrontational politics (see the success of the Tea Party movement and Donald Trump) the over 1,000 APWU members were urged and educated to work in logical, reasonable and fact based arguments to foster support

for their issues. Calls were made by attendees on the following days to the Congressional Representatives to vote against the proposed House Budget. You may recall from a previous MM article I wrote concerning this budget which increases employee contributions to FERS, changes retirement computation from average high three years pay to average high five years, eliminates COLA for FERS retirees, and reduces COLA for CSRS retirees. The budget passed on October 5th with a 218 majority vote by all Republicans. Now it goes to the Republican ma-

jority Senate for consideration. Hang on to your wallets APWU members.

That same Sunday night as the Legislative Conference, the air in Las Vegas was punctuated by numerous sirens. I thought it was just another big city typical happening. I awoke at 4 a.m. as the intercom in my hotel room went off telling me the emergency was over. Two hours later as I read the news on my iPad I discovered the horrific shooting tragedy just a mile and a half down the road. One APWU member who was close to the front doors of our

hotel went outside when he heard the sirens to see what was happening. Upon trying to re-enter the hotel, he found it was on a lockdown and he couldn't get in. He waited outside for over five hours until he finally could get back in. "Thoughts and prayers" were offered by our Republican Congress just as they have been during the numerous mass killings in recent years while no type of restrictive gun legislation has been passed by these Republicans. And now this same Congress had over 60 Republicans vote
continued on page 5

Michigan

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United We Stand - Divided We Fall!

by

John Greathouse

Looking back over the past 2 months of events happening around Michigan, the US and the World, I have come to the conclusion that someone needs to please stop the ride and kick a few people off!

Let’s start with Michigan (only because it is a good place to start).

The CLUW National Conference for Union Woman was held in Downtown Detroit at the Renaissance Center/Marriott Hotel. President Mark Dimondstein was a keynote speaker during the conference as well as one of the speakers during the “Taking it to the Streets” Rally with over 300 Union members, almost 95% were women in front of the Spirit of Detroit statue by City Hall. This group got so fired up, security from City Hall came out as asked us to try and keep it down . . . Fat Chance! This just fired them up even more!

President Dimondstein was joined in Detroit by APWU Vice President Debby Szeredy, APWU Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell and Lynn Pallas-Barber along with Officers from several locals across the state.

CLUW’s goals are the same as the APWU to empower women in the workplace, advance women in their unions and promote policies that support women and working families.

Across the Country

Did someone piss off Mother Nature?

The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

Battle Creek	480-481	Jackson	Stevensville
Central MI	486-487	Ludington	Traverse City
Cheboygan	498-499	Muskegon	Troy Local
Detroit District	Gaylord	Roger City	Western MI
Farmington	Great Lakes Area	Sault Ste Marie	
Flint	Mail Haulers	Southwest MI	

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EDITOR

• • •

Please Stop The Ride And Kick A Few People Off!

Hurricanes, Wildfires, Shootings and Stupid Twitter wars!

Three category 5 hurricanes have hit the United States, what seems like half of California is on fire, and some wacked in the head person opens fire and kills 58 people for no reason!

All of these events have one thing in common . . . Americans coming together to help others in their time of

century version of “Nero fiddled while Rome burned . . .” I do not want to inflate Mr. Trump’s ego more by referring to him as Nero or to give Congress anymore more reason to do nothing as they are so good at doing just that.

Wildfire

Having been in Central and Southern California in July of this year, I had the opportunity to see some of the most incredible National Parks in the country. Yosemite NP is very humbling with the size and magnitude of the place. Sequoia NP with the Giant Sequoia Trees was fantastic, (You need to hug one!).

Southern California was incredible as well but there is one thing that I keep noticing, while the views were beautiful everywhere I looked, I was standing in the middle of a tin-diebox!

While it seems like the half of the state of California is on fire, the destruction and devastation is some of the worst on record. I hope all of our brothers and sisters along with their families are safe.

Congress . . . Dysfunction at its best!

Why can’t Congress pass any postal legislation that will help the Postal Service and the employees? They have run several plans up the flagpole over the past 10 years now still cannot seem to be able to get it right!

We were close a couple of years ago but the “Do Nothing but Obstruct GOP” would not let anything that would work get through period! Now that they are in charge, it seems that they do not know how to lead except to still keep on blocking something that might actually work.

I have come to the conclusion that with the past track record, any GOP House or Senate member who is up for reelection in 2018 should be voted out and shift the balance back to the Democrats who seem to have been able to work with Mr. Trump in getting things passed that will help America.

Brothers and Sisters, we ALL need to sit up and pay close attention to the events for the next year and be active and VOTE!

Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR



by
Roscoe
Woods

House Budget Resolution

On Thursday, Oct. 5, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to advance its 2018 budget resolution. This resolution is a broad measure that designates government spending with far-reaching implications, including enormous cuts to postal and federal workers. While the resolution passed the House on a narrow 219 to 206 vote, a federal budget can only take effect if agreed to by both chambers. The Senate next has to consider its own resolution and recently released a budget starkly different from the House version. While the House resolution contains instructions to cut \$32 billion from the committee of jurisdiction over the Postal Service and postal/federal pay and benefits, these are absent from the Senate budget resolution. The Senate budget also does not call for bringing the Postal Service “on-budget.”

Judy Beard APWU National Legislative Director thanks the tens of thousands of postal and federal workers called on their lawmakers throughout the summer and fall to reject any budget balanced on the backs of workers. She said, “To all of APWU activists who made the call, who visited in person, thank you, you stepped up and made known to your member of Congress the devastating effects the budget resolution would have on workers. I know you will continue to be seen and heard as the budget moves forward. The

budget fight is far from over.”

President Mark Dimonstein noted, “It is imperative that the House’s

and benefits of the postal or federal work force. I ask you all to consider whether or not you are over paid for the work you do? Is the idea that you

send a few more dollar up to the top of the food chain. Those issues that divide us in my opinion are truly politics of fear and I am not afraid of too many things, most certainly the idea that someone wants to confiscate my guns or that someone will dictate to me how I pray or what religion to believe in and I am certainly not afraid of someone because they look different than me when they look into their mirror.

I first and foremost review their voting record when it comes to the issues that determine my ability to earn a living wage and have decent benefits. Mine is the politics of the checkbook.

This issue noted above, if the GOP gets its way it will in large part make retirement a pipe dream for a lot of us. There is no need to change the current process, the agency that is the USPS is not broken. The changes are driven for no other reason that to deliver tax cuts to those who do not need them, believe me or not this budget sets the stage for wholesale tax reform and unless you all think losing your mortgage interest deduction, your deduction for state tax as well as your deduction for PMI will help you put more money in your pocket then I really am at a loss as to what to say to you.

I will keep trying since persistence as I understand it is a virtue.

Selfishness regardless of Speaker Paul Ryans opinion is not.

In Solidarity. — www.apwu.org



Pictured left to right are Patrick Chornoby - DDAL Vice President, Keith Combs - DDAL President, Roscoe Woods - 480-481 President, Lynn Palas-Barber - APWU Asst. Clerk Craft Dir., and Steve Wood - 480-481 Vice President.

attacks on the postal and federal workforce are kept out of the Senate budget, and out of any possible compromise resolution between the two chambers, our continued activism and engagement will be crucial.”

As far as how Michigan voted in the house, once again it was along party lines with the 8 Republicans voting for this bill and the 5 Democrats voting against. We can expect our two Senators Stabenow and Peters to vote against any bill that attacks the rights

might after 35-40 years of service receive a pension that allows you to live a life free of poverty and bankruptcy too much to ask?

My politics which is the politics of a working person falls on deaf ears for so many of you when it comes to supporting elected representatives who will protect your ability to earn a living wage. I gave up understanding or even trying to understand the racial, religious and 2nd amendment issues that drive voters to vote for politicians who would leave you in poverty to

MAINTENANCE CRAFT DIRECTOR



by
Sterling
Bouier

Custodial Team Cleaning

Hello MPWU Brothers and Sisters.

First, let’s talk about CTC. Custodial Team Cleaning is a process for cleaning facilities that the USPS decided to implement. By now, the majority of facilities have implemented this system and the rest are in the process, since it is required. As maintenance employees, we need to document our work and file grievances, if our contract is violated. Please ensure that the time given to perform a task is sufficient. If it requires more time than listed, please ask the supervisor to adjust the route time accordingly. This greatly affects your staffing. If management refuses to do so, file a grievance and have your steward challenge these times given to perform CTC routes. Most facilities

place the minimum time limits, pressure employee’s into signing routes off as complete, and their facilities are dirty. The only way to protect your job and someone else’s in the future is to fight for the required hours.

Second, EWP. Electrical Work Plan. Most maintenance employee’s have taken their annual training on EWP and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). In a lot of places around the country, the program itself is not being followed. Employee’s are issued the PPE and never use it. They work on energized equipment and do not put up barricades, wear their PPE, and do the things that the program requires. We must start to follow the requirements. Employee’s in other parts of the country are being fired for not properly locking out equipment or not donning their protective gear. Also, routes that require the use of PPE, must be challenged and the required

times adjusted to accommodate and allow the maintenance employee time to get their PPE, don it on and off, get the gates to block off area, etc . . . Taking shortcuts only hurts us. You are endangering your self. Also, you are making it appear that the program is working properly and that you can perform that work in a limited amount of time.

Let me end by stating that I attended the All Craft Conference in Las Vegas earlier this month. I received the opportunity to ask questions and conversant with our National Officers. Maintenance Craft had training on Subcontracting, Discipline, Travel Pay, and Crossing Occupational Groups. And more importantly, our APWU family all made it home safely and were blessed to avoid the horrific tragedy that occurred while we were there. Life is short. Please live, enjoy, and love one another.

As always feel free to contact me if there are and questions or if you are in need of my services. I am here to serve. I can be reached at 313 965-1398 or at sbouier@apwudetroit.org.

In Union Solidarity.

It’s your move . . .

Protect your job. Protect your future.
Get involved in your Union!

AREA 1 DIRECTOR



by
Steve
Wood

All Craft Conference

On October 1, 2017 the American Postal Workers Union was conducting its bi-annual training (All Craft Conference) at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas. There were thousands of our fellow union brothers and sisters there for this very important training. This included dozens of the stewards from our local as well as the Detroit District and the state of Michigan.

That night at approximately 10:00 P.M. Las Vegas became just another victim of terrorism. The definition of Terrorism that I found states "The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in pursuit of political aims."

Alleged shooter Stephen Paddock opened fire on the Route 91 Harvest Festival, killing approximately 58 people. It is alleged that Paddock was perched on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel across the street from the festival. His motives are still unknown.

Monday morning as the All Craft Conference was in full swing our national leadership were conducting head counts, to insure that all were accounted for. I want to take a minute

to say thank you to our own President Roscoe Woods. President Woods realized the magnitude of the event. the job. You truly care about people, and that matters. Months ago the Postmaster Gen-



Pictured left to right are Roscoe Woods - 480-481 President, Steve Wood - 480-481 VP, James Stevenson - NBA and Sharron Stone - Central Region Coordinator.

He contacted each of the individuals from our local to make sure they were safe and accounted for. Your leadership during this very difficult time was spot on brother, and just reaffirms my belief that you are the right person for

eral visited the Michigan Metroplex. She stated to our local president that the employees are the most valued asset in the Postal Service. At this point I must disagree with her. What was missing after this horrific event

was the concern from postal management. Hundreds of your employees from installations all across the state and you do not check to see if all are safe. I find this to be an insult. We may not agree on many things but this union truly cares about all employees, managers, supervisors, and craft as well. We are the union and we may have fundamental disagreements but we are still employees of this company and your most valued asset?

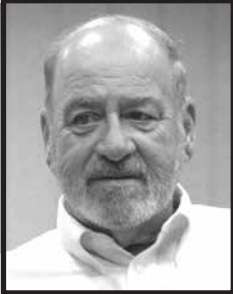
We were not ignored by all management. We did receive text and email messages from Acting Poom 4 an individual detailed from Milwaukee, our step 2 labor designee, thanks to Jeff and Alyse for caring. We were also contacted by Dorothy from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Until the Postal Service acknowledges that we are their most valuable asset, and truly show that they care about the people that work for them, we will continue to have those fundamental differences.

I am happy to report that all APWU representatives have returned home and are safe. Why? Because we do care.

Until next time I remain yours in solidarity.

M.P.W.U. RETIREE ADVISOR



by
Al
LaBrecque

A View From The Mitt

"Just because we're retired, we're NEVER out of the arena!" — Me

FEHB Open Season! It's that time of year! Nov. 13, 2017 - Dec. 11, 2017! Health insurance coverage is a critical benefit retirees should carefully pay attention to premiums and coverage. To make comparisons, making sure your Plan is accepted by your providers. Okay . . . I've already violated my resolve to back off. However, this is a column, an editorial of sorts, that's timely for retired members to know. As with the above quote; I repeat that I do not "sell" insurance of any kind, including the APWU Health Plan. I can only compare my own personal experience of 25 years retirement. We are insured by the FEHBP APWU Health Plan Self Plus One. But! It was not always this way! I'll explain later in this column.

2018 APWU Premiums Go Down! (Non-Postal) Retiree rates: High Self - \$2.70. High Self & Family - \$2.61. High Self Plus One - \$4.20. We're enrolled in the latter for a 'savings' of \$50.40 per

year. More significant is comparing the APWU Self + One with Blue Cross/Blue Shield Self + One monthly premium. BC/BS comes in \$156.04 per month higher than APWU. That's a difference of \$1,872.48 per year for comparable or better coverage. But . . .

Not So Fast My Friends! If you, and/or your spouse, are not yet enrolled in Medicare Parts A & B, usually due to the 'age gap' until reaching age 65 Medicare eligibility; you should be aware of this. Cigna is the APWU 'umbrella' or underwriter that negotiates in-network providers, generally in high density population urban areas. Not so much in rural Michigan; about 2/3 of the state, the northern Lower and all the Upper Peninsula. Cigna operates a lot like privatizers UPS, FedEx, and Pitney Bowes, who would skim the cream in high populated areas, leaving rural America to the scavengers. In short, rural Michigan is drastically underserved by Cigna.

What we unfortunately discovered is that Cigna 'hands off' negotiating in-network providers in rural Michigan to a third party who "bundles" several Plans in a package that includes, APWU, NALC, Mailhandlers, Seafar-

er's Union, etc. Providers; as with my Alcona Health Centers, do not, and will not accept bundled insurance packages. Nearly all, however, universally accept BC/BS. As a consequence working and retired members residing in this vast rural area are forced to enroll in BC/BS at least until reaching age 65 and enrolled in Medicare Parts A & B.

Thus, although the best (by far) bang for the buck, FEHBP APWU Health Insurance is a tough sell in the rural two-thirds of the State of Michigan, except for those members and spouses who are age 65 and older enrolled in Medicare Parts A & B. Medicare becomes the primary insurance, and the FEHBP Health Plan becomes secondary. Then, those members are free to change during Open Season to a FEHBP Plan of their choice. In that case; our choice is the proven excellent coverage and the \$156.04 difference between the APWU Health Plan and BC/BS.

This "age gap" is a glitch seldom, if ever discussed in polite company! It's there, we lived it! I believe members have a right to know, and I have an obligation to sound the warning, even at the risk of alienating APWU Health

Plan administration. Members residing in rural areas like Michigan have every right to know about the "rural age gap" glitch. That includes, and most significantly; Cigna's handing off rural area health providers to a third party who "bundles" several Plans in a package in their pitch to sell providers to become in-network. It's my experience that rural area providers are not prone to accepting bundled Plans. The good news is that once you and your spouse are enrolled in Medicare; it makes no difference! They have to accept your secondary coverage. Except for some prescription co-pays, we pay little or nothing out-of-pocket under the APWU High Self + One coverage. Once informed, it's strictly your choice.

More Good News! Looks like the 2018 Social Security COLA and CSRS Annuity COLA will increase by 2%! With APWU premiums lowered for 2018, the only premium yet to be announced is the 2018 Medicare premium rate expected to increase. In my view from the "Mitt(en)", our Medicare premiums are among the best money we spend. God Bless LBJ!

Solidarity Forever!

AREA 2 DIRECTOR



by
**Patrick
Chornoby**

Needs Of The Service

Greetings Union Brothers and Sisters.

Recent financial reports from the Postal Service have shown larger than anticipated financial business losses over the past years. Of course, it is blamed on the pre-funding of health care benefits that the USPS is required to pay for employees that haven't even been hired yet. In fact, some haven't even been born yet! Regardless of this ridiculous burden placed on the USPS, the company suffers. As a result, we as bargaining unit employees have to suffer. The reasoning is because benefits of employment that we would normally be given, are taken away to pay this debt. This is done by cutting back on our benefits, hiring less employees to process the mail, combining additional duties onto our jobs, and so on.

To cut back on expenses, the postal service has not been filling vacant duty positions, hiring has slowed down to nearly nothing, and we employees are having a more difficult time in getting time off from work when we request it.

I am finding that employees who give their supervisors a two to four week advance notice of the need to take a day of are being denied because of the "needs of the service". This is happening throughout the state, even for requested leave to attend doctor's

term as president. This guaranteed employees a total of 12 weeks of FMLA leave per year, where you can use your Annual Leave, Sick Leave or Leave Without Pay for any FMAL covered absence – GUARANTEED. This is great leave to use because

are veterans. These veterans are entitled to use the additional leave during their first year of federal employment in order to receive medical care for their service-connected disabilities without having to suffer loss or reduction of pay. Employees hired on or after Nov. 5, 2016, will be eligible to take advantage of this benefit from their first day of employment. Back in 1930, an Executive Order was signed for disabled veterans who are civil service employees, essentially without limit, to take sick leave, annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP), without penalty for the purposes of obtaining medical treatment and recuperation.

Other options under our Collective Bargaining Agreement provide employees to take sick leave for their dependent care and guaranteed leave to attend a family members' funeral.

Remember that when you request leave, request in advance, as much time in advance as possible if you need time off. If management disapproves your request, you need to file a grievance. If your absences can be connected to any of the above benefits (FMAL, Veterans Leave or Dependent Care) ask for a union steward for assistance. Don't take "NO" for an answer to your leave request.

"The new law grants up to 104 hours of paid leave to all newly hired federal employees who are veterans."

appointments scheduled a month in advance. Management's reason for denying advanced requested leave is because they are short staffed.

Under the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and the Employee & labor Relations Manual, we earn our leave. Career employees earn sick leave and annual leave, Postal Support Employees earn annual leave. We are also provided opportunities to use our earned leave under contract provisions.

I am advising our members to be creative in planning and their earned leave. President William "Bill" Clinton passed a law called the Family and Medical Leave Act back during his

the USPS cannot deny you this leave for your own illness or that of a family member once your claim is approved. It can also be used for your medical treatment, maternity leave and for you to take if your dependents suffer from such illnesses.

Additional leave which benefits our Members is the Wounded Warrior Leave Act, Title 5, United States Code, which provides leave to any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability, and for other purposes. The new law grants up to 104 hours of paid leave to all newly hired federal employees who

APWU Retiree Conference And The Insanity

continued from page 1
against aid to the devastation in Puerto Rico wrought by the recent hurricane. Let's face it. These Congressional representatives are out of touch with the reality of the everyday person. All of them have a lot more money to live on than you or I and live in considerably better circumstances than we do. Yet Americans continue to vote them into office based on the promise to "Make America great again" as if they could turn back the clock to the post WW2 days of the booming economy. They forget the rampant discrimination against minorities and women, the pre-Medicare days when older folks simply died without affordable medical care, the workers killed because of lack of safety and health laws, the poisoning of rivers and lakes without environmental regulations and on and on the list goes. There is no going back. We must elect government representatives who can see the world outside of the castles they live in.

In an almost anti-climatic mood, the Retiree Conference continued Oct. 2nd through the 4th. The main topic was increased Retiree representation within our Union. Retiree members have a "back of the bus" representation status in Union mat-

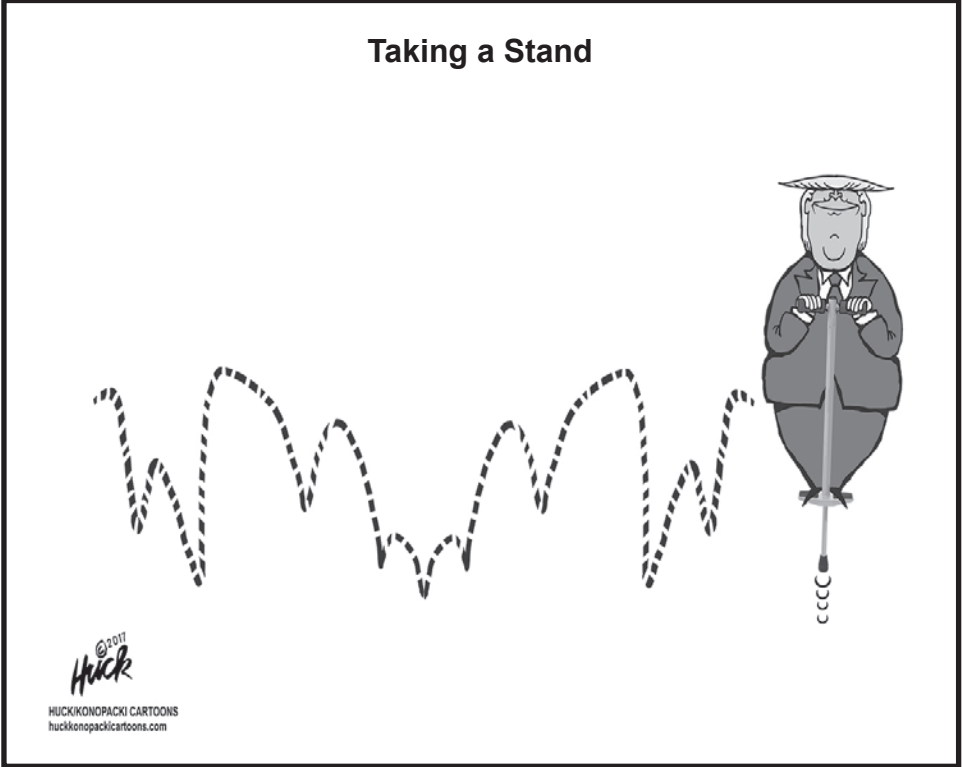
ters on the APWU National Convention floor with only five retiree delegates compared to some 2,000 still working members. Such status is based on the fact that they pay only \$3 per month versus the full dues that the still working members pay. It is forgotten that tens of thousands of retirees paid full dues for decades and those dues built the APWU from its infancy. Retirees were raucously vocal in their demands for full representation on the Convention floor. The 2018 National Convention will tell the tale of whether retirees get the respect they deserve.

Another issue raised by this writer was the hundreds of thousands of dollars contributed to the APWU National Constitution mandated "retiree organizing fund" in the last five years. This money comes from retiree dues and is designated solely for organizing (enlisting more APWU retirees as members in the APWU Retirees Department). I simply wanted an accounting of where this money is spent and how much we have in the organizing fund. Unfortunately our Retirees Department Director was unable to provide an accounting of this huge amount of money. I do not necessarily blame the Director as it is up to our National Secretary-Treasurer to provide

such information and it was apparently unobtainable. Nonetheless it is high time to sign up and motivate the seeming thousands of retirees who do not belong to the APWU.

While numerous benefits can be cited for retirees belonging to the APWU for \$3 a month, I belong out of gratitude for all my Union did for me while I was working. The efforts

of my Union and its officers allowed me to enjoy a reasonable middle class standard of living and retire in modest comfort-a state which is constantly threatened and which my Union continues to work to protect. As my old friend and Union mentor used to say "without the Union, we would all be casuals". So today I remain a proud and grateful APWU member.



VETERANS' DIRECTOR

Veterans' News



by
John P.
Smeekens

Veteran's Day 2017

How about this Veterans' Day, you take a minute to Hug or Shake the hand of a Veteran, and tell them "Thank You for your service to our Country." And please take an extra second by simply saying, "WELCOME HOME." Veterans Day is when we are asked to take time to Honor our living Veterans. There are usually parades, and quite a few places now offer free or discounted meals for Veterans. And with all the things happening right now in our society, please make sure that if you see a Veteran, no matter what age, era, or even time of year, approach them and say, "THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY. WELCOME HOME!"

To all my Brothers and Sisters Veterans,

"THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY, WELCOME HOME!"

VA Health Care

Did you know that if you're enrolled in VA health care, you can use My HealtheVet to partner with your VA health care team to better manage and improve your health?

Through My HealtheVet, you can: Refill and track VA prescriptions online, Communicate with your health care team through Secure Messaging, Track your upcoming appointments and get reminders, and View, print or download your VA medical record information and much more.

You can start today by registering for My HealtheVet and taking the HealtheLiving Assessment. This information will help you understand your health risks and how to start making positive changes in your daily routine. To get started, visit myhealth.va.gov.

Learn how to apply for VA health care by visiting Explore.VA.gov.

Important Message

Many of us have started watching Ken Burns & Lynn Novick's 10-part documentary film series "THE VIETNAM WAR", which began on Sunday, September 17 on most PBS stations across the country. For some, the documentary may bring back powerful emotional memories and so I urge you not to watch it alone. If you do find yourself bothered by such strong emotional memories, please don't hesitate to call: The Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (Press 1), or The Vet Center Combat Call Center, 1-877-WAR-VETS Extra operators will be on stand-by!!!

Woman Veterans' Health Care

The fastest growing population

group in the military today is women who currently comprise 14.5 percent of active duty personnel and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserves. The face of VA healthcare is changing. Younger female Veterans are using VA services more frequently, including for maternity care, and having service connected disabilities, while older Veterans are using VA services for menopausal needs, geriatric care, and extended inpatient stays. From 2000 to 2013, women Veterans using VA services have more than doubled, from 159,000 to 390,000.

The Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain and its seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics throughout the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin served and cared for over 1,100 women Veterans in 2016. The VA provides a full continuum of care for women Veterans, including comprehensive gender-specific primary and specialty care, mental health services, disease prevention and screening, maternity care coordination, and urgent care services. Enhanced maternity care is typically provided through arrangements made by the VA with local non-VA health providers. VA also provides maternity education and tools, childbirth preparation, breastfeeding support and lactation classes, breast pumps and other supplies, and care to the newborn for the first seven days after birth. The medical center and each field community clinic

have designated health providers and nurses who are trained in women's health. "By having trained, gender-specific providers at the medical center and each of our community clinics we can offer our women Veterans comprehensive care in a single visit," said Barbara Robinson, RN, Women Veterans Program Manager.

Women's health services provided by the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center have continued to excel in clinical practices and care for women Veterans. This is evidenced by the independent External Peer Review Program's clinic measures, which shows the Iron Mountain-based VA medical center consistently screened 85 percent or more of its age appropriate women Veterans for breast and cervical cancers and osteoporosis exceeding regional and national averages. "As the population of women Veterans grows, the number being treated for breast cancer continues to increase, so it is very important to us that our women Veterans get screened because when breast cancer is detected in its very early stage chances of a successful treatment are much higher," said Robinson. To provide more timely and comprehensive health care services to women Veterans, the medical center opened a separate Women's Wellness Clinic in 2012, which also offers a private waiting area for women and their children while waiting for appointments. Another enhancement

to women Veterans healthcare is the establishment of the VA Women Veteran Call Center, which provides a one-stop contact for getting information on benefits, eligibility, services, and resources specifically for women Veterans. It also offers an online, one-to-one anonymous chat function via real-time text messaging accessible by going to www.womenshealth.va.gov and clicking on the icon labeled "Chat with the Women Veterans Call Center."

The call center is available Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET and on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET. Their Number is 1-855-829-6636.

Community based VA clinics are located in Sault Saint Marie, Manistique, Marquette, Hancock, Ironwood and Menominee, Michigan, and in Rhineland, Wisconsin.

Veterans ID Cards

The VA will begin issuing veteran identification cards to all honorably discharged veterans in November. The initiative is required by the Veterans Identification Card Act 2015, which ordered VA to issue a hard-copy photo ID to any honorably discharged veteran who applies. The card will be issued for free upon request, and will contain the veteran's name, photo and a non-Social Security identification number. VA will provide additional information once finalized.

MPWU RETIREE CHAPTER SECTREAS

Social Security Announces 2.0 Percent Benefit Increase For 2018

by Jane Duggan

Friday, October 13, 2017 the Social Security Administration announced that both social security recipients and CSRS/FERS retirees will receive a 2.0 percent Cost of Living (COLA) increase in 2018. The new/ higher payments will begin in January of 2018. The new benefits will be payable to 61 million Social Security

beneficiaries. The average increase will be \$25 a month.

Good News – Bad News

The good news is that 2.0% is much better than last year's 0.3%. The bad news is that the 2% increase will not cover the increased monthly cost of Medicare B for those who elected that coverage when you became eligible for Medicare. Medicare

B may increase as much as 5.4 % in 2018. The actual amount has not been released yet.

The Social Security Act ties the annual COLA to the increase in the Consumer Price Index as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Information about Medicare changes for 2018, will be announced at a later date.

Veterans' Day Observed On Saturday, November 11: Postal Retail and Delivery Closed

Each year, Veterans' Day is celebrated on Nov. 11. For 2017, the holiday falls on a Saturday.

There has been some confusion about when the Postal Service will observe the holiday because it has a six "business" day week. For clarification, USPS Retail and Delivery will be closed on Saturday, November 11, 2017. It will be business as usual on Friday, November 10, 2017.

In a letter to the APWU the Postal Service writes:

"In an effort to ensure clarity regarding the upcoming holiday, please note that in observance of the holiday the Postal Service will not conduct normal mail delivery or retail operations on Veterans' Day (Saturday, November 11). Package delivery will be performed on November 11-12."

Regular Employees with Saturday as their normal workday will observe the holiday on Saturday. Employees with Saturday as their scheduled off day, will observe Friday as their holiday. Those employees with Friday and Saturday as their scheduled off days, will observe Thursday as their holiday.

UPDATE: Veterans' Day is not one of the negotiated holidays PSEs receive pay for.

2018 APWU Health Plan

by John L Marcotte, Director
APWU Health Plan

Question to John Marcotte about the changes to the APWU Health Plan for 2018?

Over the last two years the overwhelming input from active and retired members was that premiums are becoming unaffordable. If the trend continued retirees and some active members stated they may be forced to go without coverage as health care costs continue to go up much faster than increases in their paycheck or annuity.

The diabetic and hypertension wellness plans, as constructed, were not working to keep health

plan members with these conditions from needing additional drugs, treatments and their associated higher costs. This is directly opposite of what was predicted when these plans were initiated.

Drug costs have been spiraling out of control for all conditions. Insulin is a good example, with costs exploding 4 times between 2010 and 2017 to almost \$7000 a year.

The challenges of keeping premiums affordable in an environment where the USPS is paying less year after year while the costs of medical care are increasing greater than inflation are difficult. While no one at the health plan or on the health plan board of directors ever wants to cut benefits, the situation in American

health care sadly has made it the norm.

In both 2015 and 2016 payments made by the health plan to cover the medical needs of our members were more than the premiums we collected for health care. Obviously that trend cannot continue.

With premiums at their breaking point for our members it necessitated looking at whether programs designed to lower costs and improve the health of our members were working. They were not. There is also an issue of fairness. Take a High Option member with an illness or disease other than hypertension or diabetes. Why should their care be covered at 90% while others with the above conditions get 100% cov-

erage? Treating one member one way and another member differently is not what unions are about or should aspire to be.

Even after these adjustments in our wellness programs the coverage for these conditions in both our plans are highly competitive and in most cases superior to the coverage's in other FEHB plans. It is just not 100% for these conditions.

Going forward we are looking into new wellness programs that will truly improve the health of our members while controlling costs and therefore increases in premiums.

The APWU health plan is committed to providing high quality health care at the most affordable price.

2018 Social Security COLA To Health Care Executive Order


2018 Social Security COLA will be 2.0%: Not Enough to Offset Medicare Part B Premiums; House Slashes Medicare to Fund Children's Health Insurance Program; President Trump Signs Health Care Executive Order, Ends Affordable Care Act Subsidies; CNN: Investigation Finds Drug May Be Inappropriately Prescribed Pill to Nursing Home Residents; Nebraska Alliance Elects Officers, Wisconsin Alliance Draws Gubernatorial Candidates.

2018 Social Security COLA will be 2.0%: Not Enough to Offset Medicare Part B Premiums

The Social Security Administration announced Friday that next year's Social Security cost of living adjustment (COLA) will be 2.0%. That means an increase of \$25 per month for the average beneficiary.

According to the nonpartisan Kaiser Foundation, however, this will not be enough to offset the rise in Medicare Part B premium costs for 2018.

Coverage for Medicare Part B is optional, but 91 percent of Medicare beneficiaries are signed up for it. The program covers physicians' care, outpatient care, certain medical equipment, laboratory tests, some health home services, and other care for patients. According to a Senior Citizens League study, retirees have lost one-third of their buying power since 2000 because COLA increases haven't been able to catch up with skyrocketing health care and housing costs. Researchers expect Part B premiums to increase an average of 5.4 percent each year between 2017 and 2024.



Western Michigan Area Local member

Comprehensive health benefits at an affordable price.


OPEN SEASON DATES
November 13 -December 11, 2017

We work hard to keep your premiums low.

	Enrollment code	Non-Postal biweekly	Non-Postal monthly	Category 1	Category 2	APWU career	APWU career rate change*
HIGH OPTION							
Self Only	471	\$93.04	\$201.59	\$86.67	\$80.31	\$86.67	+ \$1.61
Self Plus One	473	\$185.79	\$402.55	\$172.15	\$158.51	\$172.15	+ \$4.25
Self and Family	472	\$251.90	\$545.78	\$237.41	\$222.92	\$237.41	+ \$5.37
CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION							
Self Only	474	\$63.97	\$138.61	\$58.21	\$53.10	\$12.79	+ \$0.43
Self Plus One	476	\$140.74	\$304.93	\$128.07	\$116.81	\$28.15	+ \$0.95
Self and Family	475	\$153.53	\$332.65	\$139.71	\$127.43	\$41.83	+ \$2.82

*Rate change is the premium increase members will pay in 2018 over 2017.

TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.



apwuhp.com
OPEN SEASON HOTLINE
800.PIC.APWU


High Option

100% COVERAGE IN-NETWORK

- Preventive care and screenings
- Maternity care
- Accidental injury within 24 hours
- Lab tests (\$0 for covered blood work performed at LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics)
- Visits to registered dietician/nutritionist
- Diabetes management: Generic medication, glucose test strips, lancets and coaching calls
- Weight management, pregnancy and tobacco cessation programs

COPAYS IN-NETWORK

- \$25 for office visits, including specialists and virtual visits
- \$40 for urgent care centers
- \$10 for retail generic drugs – non-specialty



The High Option features the Cigna Healthcare provider network.


Consumer Driven Option

100% COVERAGE IN-NETWORK

- Preventive care and screenings
- Maternity care
- Pregnancy and tobacco cessation programs
- Personal Care Account covers 100% of the first \$1,200 expenses for Self Only or \$2,400 for Self Plus One and Self and Family

COPAYS IN-NETWORK

No upfront deductible, coinsurance or copay until Personal Care Account is exhausted.



The Consumer Driven Option is administered by UnitedHealthcare.

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT

...

Turney At The Table



by
Linda
Turney

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

Maximization Duty Assignment Tools, MDAT

Your National Union has been fighting the battle against reducing Post Office jobs. Article 37.3.A.1 is our best defense in that argument and MDAT is what we must use to argue our case.

If you are a President, MDAT can be found at APWU.ORG, Members Only page. You must be a President or your President may expand access to MDAT to other officers and stewards on the ADMIN ACCESS bar of the program. There is a maximum number of 3 people that can use this important program.

MDAT is really important. We cannot go forward with grievances under Article 37.3.A.1 without it. When you

request information from management, we request not only the PDF clock rings that are common, we also put in a request for information for the CSV format. The CSV format gives users a bar chart that shows a 24-hour clock of the clock rings. It also gives users a chart regarding the possible duty assignments within your office.

Details of this program have been taught at the Michigan State Convention and Detroit MI. There was also an intensive 8 hour class that was recently at our All Craft Conference on October 4, 2017.

The MDAT arguments can expand to improper abolishment of jobs and improper reversions, improper excessing, and retreat rights to name a few. Article 37.3.A.1 states: Every effort will be made to create desirable duty assignments from all available work hours for career employees to bid.

Our burden is to show employees are working duty assignments. Article 8 defines what a duty assignment is: *The employee's normal work week is*

five (5) service days, each consisting of eight (8) hours, within ten (10) consecutive hours, except as provided in Section 1 of this Article.

MDAT is the tool we must use to find these duty assignments in our Post Offices. We argue that management has failed to use all available work hours to create duty assignments. Our remedy would be to immediately post or repost duty assignments using all available work hours in accordance with the operational needs of the office. Make affected employees whole including but not limited to compensating the successful bidder(s) for lost wages, OOS premium, guarantee hours, holidays, OT opportunities and/or pay until the violation is alleviated.

The USPS is determined to reduce jobs. The customers stand in line. The mail is delivered late. Employees work without a day off. Overtime is never-ending. Our only

way to fight this struggle is through MDAT.

Article 37.3.A.1 and Article 37.3.A.D. and Article 7.3.C. all obligate management to create duty assignments. The USPS has an obligation to combine all available work hours, overtime hours and hours in which supervisors do our work so as to create duty assignments for career employees. (Goldberg page 16 Q104QC 12320729) MDAT can include but is not limited to arguments concerning Article 37.3. A.1., improper reversions, job abolishment, excessing and retreat rights.

If you have trouble using this program, please call. We can make arrangements to do a special MDAT class for you and our members.

Happy Halloween, Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays.

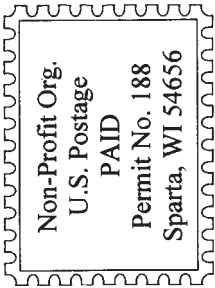
The Struggle Continues...

DEADLINE

The deadline for articles for the November-December issue of the Michigan Messenger is November 30, 2017



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