

Michigan MESSENGER

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In This Edition

Editor's Report.....	2
Retiree President.....	3
Veterans' Director.....	4
MPWU Retiree Advisor.....	5
Area 4 Director's Report.....	6
Area 6 Director's Report.....	6
Here's How Michigan's Redistricting Commission Would Work.....	7
The Hatch Act.....	8

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



by
**Michael
Mize**

Convention

I want to start by saying what an honor it was to represent the MPWU at the National Convention this year. I also believe that it is important for all members to know the Delegates from the State of Michigan did a fantastic job of representing everyone. Michigan was very involved in a great deal of debate on resolutions for most if not all issues. In fact, this State had 40 or so resolutions that were either ours or co-sponsored by us. One thing that everyone can count on is Michigan pushing for changes, representation, benefits, etc., anything to make things better and/or fair.

We passed many resolutions to try to make things better for PTF's and PSE's, which I know is something many of our membership desires. Now we must pray that we can gain some of those things we asked National to work for during negotiations. Speaking of negotiations, wear the Union gear that you can on Thursdays to show our unity for a good

contract. I have requested more wrist bands for our window clerks.

I wish I could say we got everything we were looking for, but we can't say that. One of the biggest failures in my eyes is the failure to give a fair representation to our retiree membership. We as a State continue to support our retiree membership. We have been advocating for many years more acceptance of the retiree involvement and an increased voice and vote. It is our belief that we need to keep the retirees close to teach and assist in our battles. Many of our battles could not be won without the assistance of the retirees on the front lines. Our retirees hold a treasure of history that we can't afford to forget, or it will repeat itself. We will be back to fight for this again.

One thing we did get that I am very happy and proud about is new language that allows for candidates in the National election to have candidate statements in with the ballots. This will allow people that could not afford to do a mass mailing an opportunity to have the members know what they stand for. This is a huge step to leveling the field for chal-

lengers and those not on a ticket. This resolution came from our State. Democracy at its best.

We also had two of our representatives at the Convention checking to see if the Delegates were signed up as continuing contributors to COPA. The two representatives did this in addition to everything else they had going on and did a great job. Both are State Officers as well and I believe need another big thank you for a job well done. Thank you, Robin Ely and Wendy Kempke, for signing up a large group to be continuing contributors to COPA.

This brings me to an issue, COPA donations. So, what is COPA? It is our political action fund. Union dues money does not go toward COPA and is not donated to any campaign. COPA funds are the monies that are donated to the candidates that support our cause and beliefs. These funds are raised by donations from the members.

We are headed into an election that really could have a major impact on the USPS. Our current administration has not been in our corner. Now it is not all doom and gloom. We have

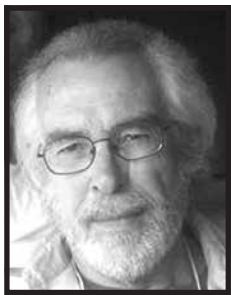
had support even across the aisle for the Postal Service. We have met with our representatives and discussed the Postal Service and legislation to help it. One thing that we all need is more people in Washington DC that have our backs. We can't afford to have more legislation or representatives that are destructive to the Service or to the Unions.

We made big steps signing people up at the Convention, but we need all members to join in this fund raising. I am not asking that everyone give a large amount of money as every little bit helps and not everyone can afford as much as everyone else. What I must say is we can't afford to not give at least a little. The requested amount for working members is \$10 per pay period. My suggestion is to look at the recent raise and give at least a portion of that. The raise is \$.31 per hour. With that everyone could give \$5 to start and still be making more money. If you can't do that then sign up for even \$1 per pay period. Any of us can afford \$1 to try to save our job and the USPS. I hate to beg, but that is exactly where we are here. I am begging you all to help save our Union jobs.



Michigan Deligation Fighting for a Better Tommorow!

R·E·T·I·R·E·E·P·R·E·S·I·D·E·N·T



by
**Paul
Browning**

During the years that many APWU members work, they may never ask for a Union Steward as their contractual rights are not violated. Nonetheless the Steward and the Union are always there to be used in time of individual or class action grievances affecting numerous USPS employees. At the same time National Business Agents in the field and officers in Washington D.C. APWU headquarters are working for the good of the membership through negotiations, contract enforcement, and education on contract and political matters and so on. All are working for a fair workplace and decent benefits, including retirement. For retirees, political legislation and the continued viability of the USPS are of paramount importance. Indeed, any legislation that affects current postal employees ultimately will affect retirees and vice versa.

Just as Union stewards on the workroom floor are the ground troops for prohibiting Contract violations, so too do activist retirees play a fundamental role in the social and political issues area. As my old friend Al LaBrecque with 60 years of Union activism behind him says “We may be retired, but we’re never out of the arena”. Even today at age 81, Al is the treasurer of his county’s Democratic Party. And Al is not alone nor the exception in his work for our Union. In the larger cities APWU retirees came out in force to demonstrate in the successful Stop Staples boycott. Grass roots retirees have worked on campaigns for legislative candidates who support postal employees and retirees. We have lobbied our Congressional representatives with letters, phone calls, emails, and in person meetings. And proportionally, voluntary donations to the APWU Committee On Political Action (COPA) are more from retirees than they are from still working members.

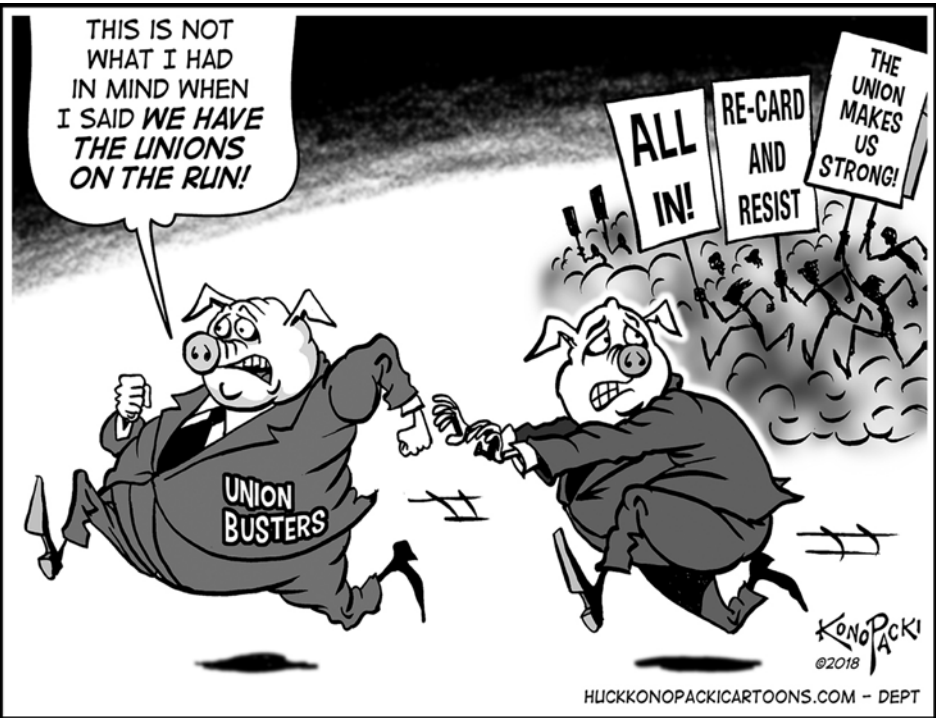
At the 2018 APWU National Convention the cry of “Have them pay full dues” was heard once again when an APWU Constitution resolution was introduced that would give retiree dues paying members full voice and vote on the Convention floor. After much debate, which I participated in by speaking for the resolution, it was defeated having failed to obtain the two-thirds vote necessary for a Constitution change. (Perhaps we should pay full dues instead of contributing to COPA?) Some may ask what’s the big deal? My answer is equality and recognition for all the years we were full dues paying members and how even in retirement we continue to

fight for the APWU. Retiree activist’s care and work for the betterment of all APWU members. As the Central Region Retiree Convention Delegate (1 of 5 allowed under the APWU Constitution compared to the other 2,200 delegates on the Convention floor) I stood and voted and spoke at a Convention floor microphone in Solidarity with my fellow brothers and sisters in the Michigan delegation. Their issues are my issues just as they are concerned about retirees. And I was proud that they stood and voted with me on the Retiree Representation resolution. My heartfelt thanks to the 100% support from Michigan.

So where do retirees go from this latest rejection of our simple request for equality? I most definitely will not quit the APWU just as I wouldn’t have when I was working even though I may not have always agreed with all actions taken by the National or Local officers. This Union gave me a better

life and I will continue to contribute to it so that all may enjoy a better life. In these times of uncertainty and threats against Unions the Benjamin Franklin adage of “We must all hang together

ployees in 2019. You can bet Postal Management will be citing this in any Contract Arbitration proceedings if it goes that far. I know that there are those who say we have heard such threats before and will ignore them now just as they have in the past. So let me remind them of the Ronald Reagan administration and then Republican Congress. It is because of them and the Windfall Elimination Provision law they passed that my Social Security check is reduced by \$400 a month. Here in Michigan, the Governor Snyder administration and Republican Legislature passed a bill taxing my Civil Service pension—a tax which did not exist when I retired. Folks, these threats are real. The only way to stop them is at the ballot box. So go the polls this November and vote for the candidate who represents our issues. And again, how many times do I have to say this? WE ARE ALL, CURRENT POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES, IN THIS TOGETHER!



or most assuredly we will all hang separately” could never be more true. Mid-term elections are almost here and it is imperative that Democrats retake control of Congress. I have previously written about the “takeaway” proposals floated by the President and this Republican Congress. Now we have the denial by President Trump of a 2.1% pay increase for Federal em-

Service pension—a tax which did not exist when I retired. Folks, these threats are real. The only way to stop them is at the ballot box. So go the polls this November and vote for the candidate who represents our issues. And again, how many times do I have to say this? WE ARE ALL, CURRENT POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES, IN THIS TOGETHER!

APWU TOWN HALL . . . Update On Negotiations

by Courtney Santos, CMAL

September 6, 2018- I listened in on the 11am Town Hall Call with some of the executive board members reporting live from Washington D.C. Here are some highlights:

Negotiations are very difficult in the current political climate. The White House Task force assigned by President Donald Trump, was due to release their recommendations 8/10/18. This still hasn’t happened. General thought is, due to the fact they are suggesting privatizing the post office (which many politicians, workers, and citizens are opposed to), they do not want to release this information before mid-term elections. This allows citizens to be unaware of the situation before casting their votes. The proposal to privatize would also end to collective bargaining which is what allows APWU to negotiate with USPS for all of the benefits you’re accustomed to or are working to obtain.

APWU is in the last 2 weeks of negotiations. That does not mean

the contract will be settled in two weeks, it simply means the APWU would like to reach an agreement with USPS in the next two weeks. If there is no agreement, the contract will then go to arbitration for a third party to review and decide on. 2015 arbitration took over a year to settle. If the contract doesn’t settle by 9/20/18, all raises, including COLA will be suspended until a settlement is reached. For everything else, the current contract is the law. The APWU bargaining committee’s meetings are becoming more frequent, and will be nearly around the clock as the deadline approaches. The team is working hard to negotiate good wages and security of benefits for all employees. They are using the topic of “bullies in management” throughout negotiations and are suggesting these grievances go straight to the national union to be handled.

APWU will continue rallying until the end, and needs your support. Here are a few ways to show it! Educate yourselves and your coworkers!

Wear your union gear on Thursdays, take pictures and hand them over to our local officers! October 8th is a JOINT DAY OF ACTION! This is the day all four postal unions across the US and US Territories get together in their respective areas to educate the public and show solidarity against these threats! Combining all four unions gives us almost a million members fighting for the same thing. Our negotiating team is concerned first with us, second with all other unions and their members. If we accept a weak contract, other unions will lose bargaining strength too. Please visit the union office/steward or the APWU website for more information on OCTOBER 8, 2018 JOINT DAY OF ACTION!



Has your name changed? Are you moving? If so please fill our form below and drop by Union or call the Union Hall at ??? so we are current on your mailing address.

VETERANS' DIRECTOR

Veteran News



by
John P.
Smeekens

VA Heath Care

The VA provides world-class health care to eligible Veterans. The Veterans Health Administration is America's largest integrated health care system, with more than 1,200 sites of care, and it is consistently ranked among the nation's top health care providers. Many Veterans may be eligible for VA health care. **Enrollment in VA health care satisfies your Affordable Care Act health coverage requirement** — no add-on insurance plan is needed. VA encourages you to explore your health care benefits, including the following services:

All enrolled Veterans have access to VA's comprehensive medical benefits package including preventive, primary, and specialty care; prescriptions; mental health care; home health care; geriatrics and extended care; medical equipment and prosthetics; and more.

Most Veterans qualify for cost-free health care services, although some Veterans must pay modest copays for health care or prescriptions.

Women Veterans can receive primary care, breast and cervical cancer screenings, prenatal care, maternity care coverage, and other gender-specific services.

Veterans who have served in combat-zones — and their family members — may visit VA's many community-based Vet Centers, which provide no-cost counseling, outreach, and referral services to help the whole family adjust to life after deployment.

Combat Veterans who were discharged or released from active service

on or after Jan. 28, 2003, are eligible to enroll in the VA healthcare system for five years from the date of their discharge or release, regardless of their disability claim status. Combat Veterans who enroll with VA under this enhanced Combat Veteran authority will continue to be enrolled after their enhanced eligibility period ends, although their enrollment priority group may change. Many Combat Veterans applying after their five-year special enrollment period ends are eligible for enrollment and are encouraged to learn more about **these and other health care benefits** on VA's health benefits page.

VA Requirements Military Service Requirements

Veterans must have served in the active military, naval, or air service and separated under any conditions other than dishonorable.

Most Veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which they were called to active duty. This includes current and former members of the Reserve or National Guard called to active duty by a federal order.

Application Requirements

Proof of discharge papers such as **DD-214**

Any additional health insurance information, including coverage through a spouse or domestic partner

Wage and financial information, including previous calendar-year gross income for the Veteran, spouse, and dependent children

To learn about all VA benefits and how to apply, visit **Explore.VA.gov**.

Wurstsmith AFB Notice

Oscoda, Michigan at Wurtsmith AFB,

the drinking water, affected by chemicals at the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base, may raise the risk of cancer for veterans and nearby families.

The risk of cancer appears in a federal report from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. It looked at the effects of chemicals used in solvents and grease, chemicals that eventually leached into the ground around Oscoda where the base was located. Now, the report has reached three conclusions. Some children and adults who used the water may be at risk for what it calls "harmful non-cancer effects." Those include heart malformations, immunological effects and developmental immunotoxicity. People who were exposed to the chemicals through drinking wells may have an increased risk of cancer. And, on-base employees exposed to benzene in drinking water in one of the buildings there may be at risk for both cancer and other harmful effects. This report comes, as some in Congress call, for extending health benefits to base veterans without having to prove their illness is linked to chemical exposure.

Veterans' & Military Exposure

If you were exposed to a chemical, physical or environmental hazard during your military service, you may be eligible for health care, **disability compensation** and other VA benefits. In addition to Agent Orange, other potential **qualifying exposures** include Camp Lejeune water contamination, potential Gulf War exposures, some potential radiation exposures, depleted uranium and more. VA offers benefits for some children of Vietnam and Korean War-era Veterans with **birth defects**. VA also offers **free health registry evaluations** for possible health problems related to environmental exposures. Although the registry health evaluations are not considered exams for disability purposes, the medical findings can be used to help file a claim. To learn about

all VA benefits and how to apply, visit **Explore.VA.gov**. For more information on VA health care, talk to your County VSO!!!

Veterans' Ticket Foundation

The Veterans' Foundation is an organization that gives out free tickets to all kind of events all across the Country to Veterans. Events like football, baseball, soccer, basketball, hockey, concerts, zoo passes, plays and more! You can sign up using the following link; **https://www.VetTix.org/ref/110** or Veterans and their families.

When you do sign up and verify your service, you will get an additional 15 VetTix Lottery Coins to start off with to bid on events you want to attend!

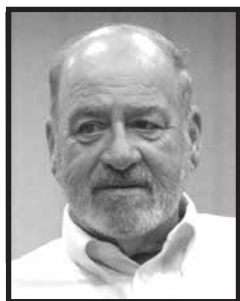
Denied MST Claims With PTSD

The VA's Office of The Inspector General, has released a report that investigated denied disability claims for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to military sexual trauma (MST). The findings concluded that the Veterans Benefits Administration processed approximately 12,000 claims annually over the past three years for PTSD related to MST. In FY2017, VBA denied about 5,500 of those claims. The OIG review team sampled 169 denied claims and discovered **82** were incorrectly processed, which indicates an overall adjudication error rate of **49** percent. The incorrectly processed denial error projections were mostly found to be due to evidence submitted, VA not requesting adequate evidence, veterans submitting claims not being contacted by VA's MST coordinators, and insufficient medical opinions. Suicide rates among military sexual assault victims are a growing problem, yet here we have The VBA incorrectly processing almost a quarter of all claims. That's not helping our veterans. If you submitted claims for PTSD related to MST and feel your claim was improperly denied, contact your local VSO for assistance.



Michigan Veterans on the convention floor.

M·P·W·U·R·E·T·I·R·E·E·A·D·V·I·S·O·R



by
Al
LaBrecque

A View From The Mitt

“Just because we’re retired, we’re NEVER out of the arena!” – Al

The ‘Arena’: Having coined that phrase as one of the “Original Five” elected National Retiree Delegates to the ‘96-’98 APWU Conventions; the arena back then meant legislative activity on retiree issues; i.e. Social Security, Medicare, Retirement, etc., and labor relations issues at the beck and call of APWU leadership; i.e. Staples, Contract Action Teams (CAT), rallies and picket demonstrations at proposed consolidation sites . . . retirees sometimes outnumbering active member’s whose very jobs were at stake. Those of us who chose to step up in retirement to help and shape the Retirees’ Dept. from the ground floor up, knew these activities would be part of our partnership with those we left behind. It was expected by us, and expected of us. What was and remains unexpected, while naively trusting retiree involvement would be welcomed with open arms; the unvarnished truth is that **“the arena”** includes internal APWU opposition to **retiree involvement** within the halls of the Union we helped build and still proud to serve. Such a colossal waste of a limitless potential asset! A new battle cry has emerged from the Retirees Dept. rank & file membership, Local & State Retiree Chapter leadership, in the wake of a particularly harsh rejection of the paramount resolution proposing **retiree representation**, in Convention; **“We’re NOT The Enemy!”**

Caveat: Let me make it clear that I was not in Pittsburgh. What I convey in this column comes from impeccable credible sources who were there, and a stream of e-mails from participants and comments from across APWU. I stand to be corrected for assumptions or observations that are off base. Never claimed infallibility. I first must recognize those who supported retiree initiatives with gratitude, especially the Michigan Postal Workers Union & Michigan Local delegates who stood in true solidarity! Until I can view the official proceedings of the 2018 APWU National Convention, whatever I relate herein are; “alleged(ly)”, “reportedly”, “according to reliable sources”, etc. The official proceedings reveals verbatim debate. Brings to mind a statement made from the Chair, Moe Biller, recorded in the official proceedings book of the 1996 APWU National Convention (I have the book); **“So you know”**, he said; “. . . **the reason we have five retiree delegates in Convention is so we can collect their COPA money**”. I heard it. I was there. Thus baptized, then Dept. Dir. John R. Smith brought us into APWU Hq. in March, ‘98 to compose resolutions around 2-3

subjects chosen for us. Not counting on guys like Byron Denton and yours truly who thrived on writing resolutions; we got our comeuppance in a NEB meeting with Biller when Exec. V.P. Bill Burrus slammed his hand on the conference table declaring; **“You are elected as retiree delegates to the national convention, nothing more!”** Now, with eyes wide open that retirees were valued only as APWU’s cash cow, we went into the ‘98 convention with an entirely new perspective. It’s likewise a matter of record in the official proceedings book of the 1998 APWU National Convention, debates opposing retiree resolutions establishing Local & State Retiree Chapters and dues structure with rebates; that prompted Retirees’ Dept. Dir., John R. Smith to declare on the mic; **“Retirees are not your COPA whores!”** Those memorable phrases ring in my ears 20+ years later. Still naive, or idealistic, I would have hoped we had advanced beyond such smallness by now. I didn’t get into this over 23 years ago at the encouragement and insistence of the late MPWU president, Clyde Hartshorn, Jr., and former Central Region Coordinator, Leo Persails, to fight with my own Union! Unfortunately, that hasn’t been the case, and that’s hurtful. I’ve got a boatload of questions primarily for the leaderships, Local, State, or National, convention delegates expressing disdain for retired members and our initiatives. The first is:

What Are You Afraid Of?: Help me understand your fear of retired members. Please don’t give me that tired malarkey that; “Retirees run the NALC. That ain’t gonna happen in APWU”. That’s a load of condensed crap! NALC traditionally **honors** their retirees as equals, not valued just for the revenue they generate. Most evident from Pittsburgh, to Michigan, to San Francisco; and all points of the APWU compass; \$36. dues-paying members of the Retirees Dept. were front and center answering the call to picket and demonstrate Union solidarity in front of Staples stores, often outnumbering active members. Informational pickets at proposed consolidation sites, appearing and testifying at USPS townhalls where postal facilities were targeted, legislative and political involvement in support of APWU objectives . . . all voluntary, at our own expense and proud to be able to do it. Not to mention that retirees reportedly have contributed more per capita to COPA than the 160,000 full dues-paying members. While I’m at it; if it were not for retiree members, the APWU Health Plan might cease to exist in its present form. So, **why** deliberately alienate retired members? What’s to fear from allowing what would be at best estimates, 100 more or less delegates from Chapters with a voice and vote in a convention of 2,000 credentialed active delegates?

Educate: I’m advised there were

several instances when a rank & file delegate would approach retiree delegates who spoke on the floor, asking for more information. Who had no idea of our origins, the history of the Retirees’ Dept., or what we’re trying to achieve. That demonstrates there’s a serious lack of knowledge and understanding of retiree history or objectives, especially among first-time delegates. Then there’s the segment of current local/state/national leaderships who simply “don’t wanna hear it!” Maybe ignorance IS bliss!

Why Should I Continue to Belong other than to be eligible to participate in the APWU Health Plan? That eligibility requirement unenforced by APWU. For a buck less a year I could enroll in the APWU Health Plan as an Associate Member. After the harsh put down of retiree delegate representation, **why** would I want to jump right up and engage in an APWU call-to-arms? Or, in good Union conscience be a disciple for organizing new members, only to lead them down the primrose path? Be a “good soldier” and turn the other cheek? Continue to work to raise COPA funds, or contribute out-of-pocket? We’re just old, not stupid! Okay, subsequent to the thumping retiree delegates and advocates endured in convention; there have been distinct, widespread calls to withhold our labor, even boycott COPA. I know of no organized effort to retaliate, but it certainly has not been lost among retiree rank & file. Instead, credit some retiree leaders and Chapters for already composing resolutions addressing retiree chapter delegate voice & vote in convention, and mechanism where Chapters could establish a local or state dues structure subject to approval of the chapter members. They’ve 2 years to refine those proposals, and educate a reluctant active current leadership, top to Local level that; “We are NOT the enemy”!

Second Class Members? The crowning blow came on Day 3 of the Convention when a question was reportedly raised if \$36. Retirees’ Dept. members were “members” under APWU Constitution, Art. 3. A question subsequently posed to the Chair if retiree members were afforded rights under **APWU Member’s Bill of Rights** reportedly was; NO! What?! I’m holding my water until I can read the exact language of that debate before considering requesting it be submitted to the Dept. of Labor for an opinion. Just to infer that APWU has a **two-tiered** member value relegating \$36. Retirees Dept. members to a **second-class** status is an insult of the highest order! For shame! In the interim, I’ve been asked not to advocate withholding COPA contributions before the Nov. 6th mid-term elections. Even if that were an organized movement, it’s doubtful it would affect this election cycle. Until and unless the question of the level of

Retirees’ Dept. membership is defined and resolved, any monetary political contribution from Al will be directly to the candidate of Al’s choice, and their name will have a **(D)** next to it. That’s just me. I’m not suggesting anyone else follow suit. It’s my statement that; Hell hath no fury like that of an APWU retiree scorned!

Used, Abused, & Bruised! Disappointed, disgusted, discounted, devalued, partially describes emotions felt, particularly the questioning of the validity of Retirees’ Dept. membership, and if retired dues-paying members of the Dept. enjoy protection under the APWU Member’s Bill of Rights. We knew going in that retiree delegate representation for Local and State Chapters would be an uphill climb, whether with a 1-25 or 1-100 ratio. To have subsequent debate **question** the level of retiree’s membership, to allegedly have the Chair discount retiree membership to a second tier, is alarming. Resolutions proposing to rescind retiree member’s right to vote for national officers except Health Plan Dir. demonstrates a disturbing distrust of retired members. Gratefully, resident national officers; Retiree Dept. Dir. Nancy Olumekor, HR Dir. Sue Carney, and Health Plan Dir. John Marcotte, spoke eloquently and forcefully against that egregiously repressive proposal reportedly authored by the Dallas local. The enmity on display between some Locals and their Chapters is foreign to my experience, truly unfortunate, and needs to be addressed by our department.

VOTE On Nov. 6th For Who or What You Want or don’t complain about Who or What you get! While the dust of the National Convention settles, with 2 years to regroup, the **most important thing we can do is engage and VOTE in the 2018 mid-term elections**. tRump has already announced a freeze to federal employee pay raises for 2019. Don’t think USPS management won’t seize on that in contract negotiations! He wants to privatize the USPS. Regardless of your traditional family or personal political stripe, or ideology; **Vote Your Pocketbook first!** As my dear politically astute Brother, Byron Denton, emphasizes; “That **(R)** next to candidate’s names stand for **Reverse!**”: Less regulations, smaller government, cut taxes for corporations and cut so-called “socialist” entitlements; S.S., Medicare . . . Do your duty . . . no excuses . . . vote absentee . . . **BUT VOTE NOVEMBER 6th!**

Convention Post Mortem in my view from the mitt is one of utter disappointment, but not despair. We’ve been here before. We’ll be back, God willing and the creek doesn’t rise. However, I cannot sign off with my usual “Solidarity Forever!” Just not feeling it. Instead; please know what my Michigan Sisters & Brothers already know . . . **“We’re Not The Enemy!”**

AREA 4 DIRECTOR

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2018 National Convention

by Sandy Rancour
August 20 through August 24 I attended the National convention held in Pittsburgh, PA, I was able to go in a few days early for some pre-convention workshops that were very helpful. I got a small look at MDAT which is a program national designed to help with work hours to create jobs. I received a thumb drive with the program on it along with many handbooks, contract, etc. also

workshops I could not attend are on the drive. Another workshop was on Small office issues. This class was filled with great information, and again on the thumb drive. This class will be very helpful for me in my new Area Director position. I also attended a workshop on how to win a grievance without filing it. Great class, taught us how to use our power at work by looking at alternative ways to deal with problems on the

workroom floor. The group was taught on how to involve several workers in dealing with the problem and showing the unity of numbers to get results. The facilitator was Ajamu Dillahunt, and I highly recommend his class. After the pre-convention workshops the convention started and was filled with wonderful speakers, a lot of resolutions passed which I think will be great to take to the next contract negotiations.

The last few weeks I have been able to go to both the Genesee post office and Montrose office and talk with a few clerks, introducing myself to them, letting them know I am the new area director. I have also been filing the e1260 for my area, learning more on the process and looking forward to improving in this area.

In unity.

AREA 6 DIRECTOR

• • •

Sign-Up That New Member



by Joshua Gray

Hello again everyone.

I have been continuing to visit offices, although there are still many I have not made it out to. If you are in an office I have yet to visit, please let me know so that I can fax over some information like the National Small Office MOU and my contact information to be posted within the office.

I have had several grievances filed so far including Postmasters performing bargaining unit work and a couple discipline cases. As a reminder to everyone reading don't forget that you must request a steward if you believe you might be disciplined. Management is not required to provide you a steward unless you ask. If you do request a steward and are denied, please be sure to take your own notes and be sure to write that down. You should then reach out to me so that we can discuss the next steps. If there's anyone in the area interested in becoming a steward, please also reach out to me so that we can get you trained.

I would also like to talk about signing up Non-Members within your installation. We are in the middle of contract negotiations at the national level, so showing a sign of solidarity to management goes a long way toward pushing those negotiations in our favor. The APWU at the national level has also come out with some good language for small offices without a local structure (which would apply to all my offices). This Memorandum of Understanding includes guaranteeing at least 1 bargaining unit employee in each installation incidental leave outside of Prime time/ the month of December and even gives management a guideline on how long until they must return your signed 3971 (72 hours in this case). Not to mention that all the great benefits like our pay, annual/sick leave, overtime, retirement, and the right to a safe workplace are all negotiated benefits and not given out of

the kindness of our Postmasters' heart. The cold truth is that without the ability to bargain together we would be forced to beg alone and we would likely be maxed out at \$15 and entry pay would

be \$8 at best with no retirement or benefits of any kind.

We are quickly approaching the end of the year and the holiday season.

Please be sure to vote on November 6th! Also have a happy and safe holiday!

In solidarity.

AFL-CIO – The Labor Wire

Customer service agents at Spirit Airlines this week voted overwhelmingly to organize with the Transport Workers (TWU). In just over two months since the Supreme Court's wrong-headed decision in Janus v. AFSCME, working people are proving that we won't allow our future to be dictated by politicians or judges. We're mobilizing, organizing and writing the next chapter of America's history.

Message of the Day - The Ultimate Act Of Democracy In The Workplace

After a landslide 82% vote, 300 customer service agents at Spirit Airlines are being welcomed as the newest mem-

bers of TWU — and a growing nationwide labor family.

"This is the ultimate act of democracy in the workplace," said TWU International President John Samuelsen as he celebrated the victory. "They are on the path to take control of their future, and the future of their co-workers. The TWU will wholeheartedly provide any assistance needed."

Mariluz Ramos, who is now carrying a freshly printed TWU union card, said he was thrilled with the outcome. "We are going to have a voice at the table and that's big," he said. "Before it was one-way decision making and now we are not going to be silenced anymore."



Here’s How Michigan’s Redistricting Commission Would Work

by Riley Beggin Bridge -
News and analysis from The Center
for Michigan, August 30, 2018

After a lengthy legal battle, a proposal to hand over the power to draw voting district lines in Michigan from politicians to a state citizens commission will go before voters in November.

The initiative, put forward by the group **Voters Not Politicians**, aims to end gerrymandering in Michigan by having this commission replace the current system, in which the state political party in power generally controls the process. Over the last decade, that party has been Republicans.

Opponents of the proposal, who are often Republicans, argue the commission would give power to unelected commissioners and is really an effort to gerrymander in favor of Democrats. Supporters of the proposal, often Democrats, argue the commission would be free of partisan influence and more accountable to the public than the current process.

Bridge reviewed the proposal and consulted Jeff Grynawski, a professor of political science at Wayne State University and Jim Lancaster, chief legal counsel for Voters Not Politicians, to determine how the commission is intended to function if enacted.

Here are seven things you need to know about the proposal:

Who’s On The Commission

The commission would be made up of 13 eligible voters who apply to become a part of the commission and who self-identify with one of the state’s two major political parties or are unaffiliated with either party. The proposal references “major parties” to allow for flexibility over time, but we’ll refer to them here as Democrats, Republicans and independents.

Four of the selected commissioners would be Republicans, four would be Democrats and five would be independents. Their terms would expire after their duties are complete for the census cycle.

If someone is chosen for the commission, they can’t hold elected office for five years after they’re appointed.

Who Is Excluded From Serving On The Commission?

The proposal is written to exclude some people who have significant political interests or connections from serving on the commission. Specifically, that includes:

- A partisan candidate or elected official in local, state or federal government
- An officer in a political party
- A consultant or employee for a political candidate, campaign or PAC
- Legislative staffers
- Registered lobbyists and their employees
- **Unclassified state employees**, except those who work for public universities, the courts or the armed forces

- The parent, child or spouse of any of the above people, including stepparents and children

If the person has not been any of these for six years, they could serve on the commission.

How Commissioners Are Chosen

Applications would open at the beginning of the year of every decennial census (i.e. 2020, 2030, etc.) and close halfway through the year. The proposal does not describe what the application would entail. If passed this November, the first commission maps would likely be used in 2022.

Any citizen (except those excluded) could apply to be on the commission. They’d be required to self-identify under oath whether they affiliate with one of the major political parties or as an independent.

The Secretary of State would also send out applications to random citizens until there’s at least 30 Democrats, 30 Republicans and 40 independents who have applied.

Then, it gets mathy.

The Secretary of State’s office would randomly select 60 Democratic applicants, 60 Republican applicants and 80 independent applicants using statistical weighting methods to “mirror the geographic and demographic makeup of the state.” If fewer apply, the pool would be proportionally populated from those who did apply.

State House and Senate leadership would review the applications and be allowed to collectively strike 20 applications from the pool of 200; Republican and Democratic leaders of both bodies could each choose five people they’d like to strike from the pool. Then the Secretary of State would randomly choose four Republicans, four Democrats and five independents from the remaining 180 applications. Those 13 would serve as the commission.

How The Commission’s Work Is Paid For

The commission would be allowed to hire any technical and legal services it thinks is necessary to complete its task (the proposal mentions hiring nonpartisan experts, conducting hearings and maintaining records as some of those expenses).

The legislature would appropriate funding for the commission in the year before the census, which couldn’t be lower than 25 percent of what it appropriates to the Secretary of State’s office. So if they were funding the commission this year, it would get at least \$4.6 million — that’s a quarter of the Secretary of State’s \$18.5 million budget.

The funding would continue every year the commission is actively operating (so, for example, it might take a year

to draw and approve maps but several more to defend them in court.) Commissioners would report expenditures, undergo an annual audit and return any unused money at the end of the year.

The commissioners would each be paid at least a quarter of the governor’s salary. If it were this year, that would be \$39,825. (That comes to just over \$500,000 for the 13 members.)

How They’d Draw The Lines

Before drawing the lines, the commission would be required to hold at least 10 public hearings across the state where it would consider proposed redistricting plans from the public. It would also accept feedback submitted online.

Commissioners would draft at least one plan for the state’s House and Senate districts and U.S. congressional districts in Michigan. They would be allowed to hire statisticians and other nonpartisan experts to help advise them, if they’d like.

Each commissioner can propose one plan for each type of district, so feasibly there could be 13 different House, Senate and congressional maps. They’d be required to also provide all supporting data they used to determine the lines.

The commission would be required to “conduct all of its business at open meetings.” Commissioners couldn’t talk about redistricting outside of the meetings unless it’s in writing with members of the public, and they (and any staff or consultants) wouldn’t be allowed to accept gifts worth more than \$20.

They would be required to consider a number of criteria in drawing the maps weighted by priority.

In order of importance, the districts should:

1. Have equal population and comply with the Voting Rights Act.
2. Be geographically contiguous.
3. Reflect the state’s diversity and “communities of interest.”
4. Not give a disproportionate advantage to any political party.
5. Not favor or disfavor an incumbent.
6. Reflect county, city and township boundaries.
7. Be compact.

The “communities of interest” weight is one aspect of the VNP proposal that critics have pushed back on, arguing that it is an arbitrary moniker that would be used to skew maps based on partisan preference.

Grynawski, of Wayne State, said the “communities of interest” standard is one that “people who draw maps would be comfortable with.”

“When we talk about (communities of interest) what we mean is other widely recognized political jurisdictions on a map,” he said. “Further north, it might be county lines. In Oakland and Wayne counties, it might be municipal boundaries.”

The National Conference of State Legislatures **describes communities of interest** as “geographical areas, such as neighborhoods of a city or regions of a state, where the residents have common political interests that do not necessarily coincide with the boundaries of a political subdivision, such as a city or county.”

How The Lines Would Be Approved

After coming up with the proposed maps, there would be 45 days for the public to comment on the plans and five public hearings throughout the state to get public input. Then the commission would vote on those maps to narrow it down to three — one for the state House, Senate and U.S. congressional districts, then vote to finalize it.

For a plan to be approved, it has to get a majority vote that includes at least two Democrats, two Republicans and two independents. If no plan can get that, they’d use a type of ranked-choice voting system.

The map would need to be approved by the beginning of November the year after the census.

How People Could Challenge The Districts Once They’re Drawn

The commission would be able to defend its maps in court using state funding.

The proposal says the Michigan Supreme Court could review challenges to the maps. If it decides the map is not constitutional, the commission would be required to draw a new version of it that fits the requirements. No other body would be allowed to draw eligible maps except the commission.

Grynawski said the maps would also be able to be reviewed by federal courts with the same process that’s been used for nearly 60 years.



The Hatch Act – What It Means To You As A Postal Employee

Political Restrictions And Examples Of Prohibited Activities

Further restricted federal employees are prohibited from taking an active part in partisan political management or partisan political campaigns. Specifically, these employees may not campaign for or against candidates or otherwise engage in political activity in concert with a political party, a candidate for partisan political office, or a partisan political group. Such employees:

- May not be a candidate for nomination or election to public office in a partisan election.
- May not take an active part in partisan political campaigns. For example:
 - May not campaign for or against a candidate or slate of candidates.
 - May not make campaign speeches or engage in other campaign activities to elect partisan candidates.
 - May not distribute campaign material in partisan elections.
 - May not circulate nominating petitions.
- May not take an active part in partisan political management. For example:
 - May not hold office in political clubs or parties.
 - May not organize or manage

political rallies or meetings.

- May not assist in partisan voter registration drives.
- May not use their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election. For example:
 - May not use their official titles or positions while engaged in political activity.
 - May not invite subordinate employees to political events or otherwise suggest to subordinates that they attend political events or undertake any partisan political activity.
- May not solicit, accept or receive a donation or contribution for a partisan political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group. For example:
 - May not host a political fundraiser.
 - May not invite others to a political fundraiser.
 - May not collect contributions or sell tickets to political fundraising functions.
- May not engage in political activity – i.e., activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group – while the employee is on duty, in any federal room or building, while wearing a uniform or official

insignia, or using any federally owned or leased vehicle. For example:

- May not wear or display partisan political buttons, T-shirts, signs, or other items.
- May not make political contributions to a partisan political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.
- May not post a comment to a blog or a social media site that advocates for or against a partisan political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.
- May not use any e-mail account or social media to distribute, send or forward content that advocates for or against a partisan political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group.

Permitted Activities

As discussed, further restricted federal employees are prohibited from taking an active part in partisan political management or partisan political campaigns. Specifically, these employees may not campaign for or against candidates or otherwise engage in political activity in concert with a political party, a candidate for partisan political office, or a partisan political group. However, such employees, for example:

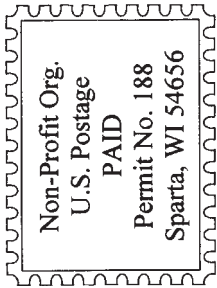
- May register and vote as they choose.
- May assist in nonpartisan voter registration drives.
- May participate in campaigns where none of the candidates represent a political party.
- May contribute money to political campaigns, political parties, or partisan political groups.
- May attend political fundraising functions.
- May attend political rallies and meetings.
- May join political clubs or parties.
- May sign nominating petitions.
- May campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances.
- May be a candidate for public office in a nonpartisan election.
- May express opinions about candidates and issues. If the expression is political activity, however – i.e., activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, candidate for partisan political office, or partisan political group – then the expression is not permitted while the employee is on duty, in any federal room or building, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or using any federally owned or leased vehicle.


DEADLINE

The deadline for articles for the November-December issue of the *Michigan Messenger* is November 2, 2018



Pittsburgh





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