



by
Michael
Mize

PRESIDENT

The Time Is Now

Across this Nation we just completed elections for many of our legislators. Now is the time that we as voters and residents here need to speak up. Elections tell them about how we feel. They see how we vote. But, we must do more. We must contact them and explain our positions on the issues.

There may be issues that we don't all agree on and that's okay. We need to be together on the issues that are clearly in the benefit of the USPS and the APWU.

We need to make the phone calls to their respective offices and explain why we support something or not and explain why they got our vote or what we need from them to earn our support.

It can be frustrating, but the simple fact is this, they all work for us. Another fact, everything starts over. If it was not passed and made a law in the last congress then it must be reintroduced. What things are important to the APWU?

The PRO Act. Protection for the rights to organize and much more. Union represented em-



Now is the time that we as voters and residents here need to speak up. Elections tell them about how we feel. They see how we vote. But, we must do more.

ployees have dropped by percentages every year. Protection of the right to organize and bargain collective must be fought for by all of us.

Moving Forward Act. Building an infrastructure that will move the USPS into the future.

Board of Governors vacancies. Having appointees that support the USPS and our mission to deliver the mail.

The list goes on and certainly there is no way I can break each item down and explain here. The great thing is I don't need to. I would ask that everyone take the time to go on the APWU web page and review what our priorities are. **APWU.ORG**, click on our Union, click on Legislative and Political, then click on our priorities. Keep yourself updated on what we strive to do for the APWU and beyond. Then contact your legislator and tell them.

The APWU will be in Washington in March of 2023, and we will be speaking to the legislators about the newest priorities at that time. We will thank them for the support and push for support for those that haven't been in our corner. I doesn't hurt for the members to let them know before we get there. Amazingly, they know when these calls come in more than you know.



by
Amy
Puhalski

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Looking Forward

Happy Holidays Brother and Sister. I would first like to introduce myself for those of you that do not know who I am. My name is Amy Puhalski, and I am currently the President of the Western Michigan Area Local and have been

for 12 years and will be for the next 3 years. I was elected by the MPWU state delegates to serve as your Director of Research and Education for the next 2 years. I apologize that I have not submitted an article prior to now as I lost my father a few months back. As difficult as it has been for me, I know time will heal and I am taking one day at a time. My father played an important part of my

life and I know he molded me to who I am today and for that I am thankful.

I look forward serving in my state position and am excited to provide education to all. Education is important to each one of us when it comes to protecting our rights that our union has negotiated for us all under our

Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Our next event is scheduled for May 2023 in Kalamazoo. I will be collaborating with the local Presidents and National Offers to ensure we have the training that is needed to represent you and our CBA.

In Solidarity.

*Here's wishing you and yours a
Joyous, Peaceful
Holiday Season and a
Prosperous New Year!*

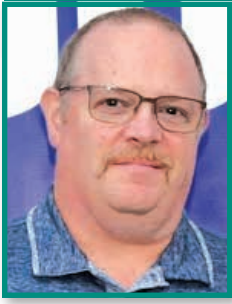
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by
John
Greathouse

EDITOR

New Veterans Life Insurance

Greetings Brother and Sisters,
With the wide range of topics that have been submitted for this edition of the Messenger, I decided to jump in and cover for our Veterans Director John Smeekens by submitting and article for the Veterans here in Michigan.

Q/A For New VALife Life Insurance Program

Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife) is VA's newest whole life insurance program that offers cash value and very competitive premium rates. Enrollment opens on Jan. 1, 2023, for all service-connected Veterans age 80 and under.

Learn more about the program and find answers to some common questions:

Who Is Eligible For VALife?

Veterans age 80 or under with any level of service-connected disability (0-100%) are eligible to apply at any time.

Veterans age 81 or older may also apply for VALife within two years of receiving notification of a new service-connected disability if they:

Applied for a new VA rated disability before age 81, and

Received a new service-connected disability after turning 81

How Do I Apply For VALife?

The VALife application goes live on Jan. 1, 2023, at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>. The application process is completely online, and Veterans will receive an automated instant decision about their eligibility for the program. If accepted into the program, Veterans can enroll and manage most aspects of their VALife policy online.

What Coverage Does VALife Offer?

VALife offers up to \$40,000 in coverage, available in \$10,000 increments. There are no medical exams or health questions for enrollment. The policy has cash value that builds over time after the first two years of enrollment.

How Much Are VALife Monthly Premium Rates?

A full breakdown of VALife monthly premium rates by age can be found here: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife-rates.asp>

VALife premium rates are competitive — or better than — similar programs offered by the private sector. Premiums are based on age upon enrollment and coverage amount selected. Current medical condition(s) or gender are not factored into premium rates. Once enrolled,

premiums will never increase on the coverage selected. If coverage is increased in the future, rates will be based on age at that time.

Why Is There A Two-Year Waiting Period For VALife Coverage To Take Full Effect?

The two-year waiting period eliminates the need for applicants to answer health questions or provide proof of good health to be eligible. This waiting period ensures access to guaranteed acceptance whole life insurance for more Veterans than ever before.

Do I Have To Pay Monthly Premium Rates During The Two-Year Waiting Period For My VALife Coverage To Take Effect?

Yes, Veterans must pay premiums during the two-year waiting period. If the Veteran dies during the two-year waiting period, all premiums paid plus interest will be paid to their designated beneficiary. The full-face value of the policy will be paid to the beneficiary after the two-year period. Veterans who pay premiums directly, rather than by deduction from their compensation or military retirement or checking account, have the option to pay premiums annually.

How Does VALife Coverage Compare To Similar Private Sector Programs?

VALife's maximum coverage of

\$40,000 is greater than what's offered by many similar guaranteed acceptance whole life insurance programs in the private sector. The cost per \$1,000 is very competitive or less than similar products, providing savings to Veterans.

Can I Switch From My Current VA Insurance Program To VALife? Can I Be Enrolled In VALife And Another Program At The Same Time?

Veterans currently enrolled in Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance (S-DVI) may either keep that coverage or switch to VALife when the application goes live:

If you have S-DVI and submit your VALife application on or before Dec. 31, 2025, then by law, you may only keep your S-DVI coverage for two years. When the two-year period concludes, your S-DVI coverage ends, and the full VALife coverage amount takes effect. Any cash value from your S-DVI coverage will be paid to you or can be applied toward your VALife premiums.

If you have S-DVI and submit your VALife application on or after Jan. 1, 2026, then by law, your S-DVI coverage ends on the day you enroll in VALife. However, you will still need to wait two years before your full VALife coverage amount takes effect.

Eligible Veterans currently enrolled in Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)

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MPWU Advisor..... Vacant

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

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by
Roscoe
Woods

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

Justice For All

I have learned over the years that our struggle for justice in our work space is no different than the struggles of so many others for justice in our neighborhoods. Now I cannot take credit for this revelation since it was not until our APWU Convention in Chicago when I heard the Reverend Doctor William Barber speak.

Truthfully it was not until that aha moment when the Reverend himself during his amazing speech put it all in perspective. The fight for justice in our work space is not separate from the struggle we fight for justice in our neighborhoods. Whether in our work space, our neighborhoods the struggle for justice is the same.

After that speech not only did I become a fan of the Reverend I also took the time to read his books. The more I read the more I understood that the powers that be have somehow convinced us these struggles we find ourselves in are different and yet now I understand with a clarity I never dreamed possible they are the same. On the 58th Anniversary of Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech at a rally held on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial the Reverend Doctor William Barber said:

"The moral and constitutional crisis we face today is the direct result of forces in state legislatures that organized to push back against the political power that mobilized here 58 years ago today.

"Because we don't have sufficient federal protections, we still have actors in state legislatures in 49 states trying to, and in many ways succeeding in, suppressing the vote, blocking living wages, police reform, health care, education funding and many more. So we are not gathered here to commemorate something that happened once upon a time. We are here today to continue the work of our fore parents who fought to expand democracy and make 'liberty and justice for all' a reality."

He went on:

"And if I could borrow from MLK: Anybody who tries to criticize these demands and say they're somehow un-American:

"If our demands for full justice are wrong, then the Constitution is wrong. If our demands are wrong then the promise of equal protection under the law is wrong. If our demands are wrong, then we might as well tear up the Declaration of Independence and its promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all people. If our demands are wrong, then the Bible is wrong in Isaiah 10 when it declares, 'Woe unto you who legislate evil and rob the poor of their rights.'

"If our demands are wrong, then someone ought to have the courage to say Jesus was wrong when he said the nations will be judged by the question: 'When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was thirsty, did you give me something to drink? When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was a stranger, did you welcome me?'"

Since that moment in Chicago I have been following the Reverend and when I see the story below from NPR I am reminded of all I have learned from the good Reverend Doctor.

To anyone who has lived in one of the more metropolitan areas in our state or our nation for that matter it is no secret that when it comes to the quality of our air, the quality of our overall environment it is the poorest neighborhoods that see the worst conditions over the longest period of time. These families not only suffer from poor air quality, poor infrastructure but they suffer from the economic realities that go with all those things since the property they may own is of a lesser value because of the environment that surrounds it.

Seeing this group that is out there trying to ensure we all have equal access to something we all take for granted, clean air, was a story I felt was worth sharing. I also found this story compelling because in light of the PMG's plans to further consolidate operations what is rarely if ever discussed is the impact on the local environment when you put that many more trucks and personal vehicles on the roads in the surrounding communities.

At the end of the day the organizers that are engaged in this study are seeking we all have "equal access to clean air" who could have ever thought this would have to be fought for, but we are grateful for their efforts. Hope you find this story from Michigan Public Radio as interesting as I did.

Meet The People Behind A Community-Based Effort To Monitor Detroit's Air

Michigan Public Radio – Sarah Cwiek

Detroit has a problem with bad air.

The city received an F for air quality in a recent report from the American Lung Association. Another study named it the Asthma Capital of the country this year, due in part to poor air.

But how bad is Detroit's air, and where are the hotspots? Gaps in air quality monitoring mean we often don't know. But some community members are trying to fix that.

"A real public health crisis with air quality"

When I met Uday Parom at Hamtramck High School recently, I asked

him to show me the air quality monitor I'd come to see. He surprised me by pulling out a small black device that looked like a mini-speaker.

"I can just put it in my pocket easily, which actually gives me the privilege to capture the data wherever I go," explained Uday, who's a sixteen-year-old sophomore and a member of the school's Clean Air Council. "My air monitor is connected to my phone via Bluetooth, and it also takes my GPS location so that it can keep track of the place where the pollution is."

He brought up that day's data on his phone: an orange blob with a lot of red squiggles. The squiggles traced his movements throughout the day. The orange meant that the Air Quality Index around Hamtramck High was moderate: not too bad, but not great either.

Uday recently took the monitor along for a little trip from downtown Detroit to some northern suburbs. The results were illuminating.

"As you can see here, the downtown Detroit area is totally red," he said. "And the more we move towards Warren, Sterling Heights, Southfield or Farmington Hills, the air quality actually gets better."

His data show what researchers and activists have long known.

"In Detroit, what we have is a real public health crisis with air quality," said Kathryn Savoie of the Ann Arbor-based Ecology Center. "We have 700 people per year that die from air quality issues."

Savoie, who lives in southwest Detroit, said air pollution is a sort of unseen pandemic: Worldwide, more people died from it in the past two years than died of COVID-19. But while we know air quality in Detroit can be poor, there's a lot we don't know — like *how* bad it is, and how it varies at the street level.

That's why the Ecology Center has teamed up with partners to install a community-based network of monitors. They've put up 35 so far, and Savoie said they hope to have another hundred or so up in the next month. They're also working on a pilot project that would integrate data from all De-

troit's air monitors, including government monitors, into one website.

"Ultimately this is about giving us the information to help change policy so that people are breathing better air and we are protecting public health," Savoie said.

More Than Just Data

One of the partners the Ecology Center is working with is a company called JustAir.

Darren Riley is the co-founder and CEO. He said its goal is not only to get more air monitors up, but to get that micro-level data and decipher it in a way that meets community needs.

"JustAir in a nutshell is really just trying to bring more transparency and visibility to the air we breathe, so that we have equal access to clean air," Riley said.

Riley only launched JustAir about a year ago. He calls it a combination of his life's journey as a native Detroit, and his expertise as a data scientist and tech entrepreneur. He developed asthma when he moved back to Detroit four years ago. Before that, he watched his father suffer from it, and saw how other pollution-related conditions burdened the community.

"Just Air really is a culmination from seeing my family suffer with certain issues," Riley said. "And it raised my awareness when I had the disease of all of my community members who suffer just because of the place they're born."

But Riley wants to do more than just capture data. He wants to make sure it's accurate, and accessible. And he also wants us to think about why air quality might differ drastically over just a short distance.

"I've seen monitors spike one mile away [from another] — having, you know, one day of a lot of moderate to poor air quality, where a mile away there's very green [air quality]," Riley said.

Through JustAir, residents can sign up to get real-time data and text alerts about air quality. Riley said having access to that kind of data can do a couple of things. It can alert people who

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New Veterans Life Insurance

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may have both VGLI and VALife coverage. Veterans can also be enrolled in Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) or other VA insurance coverage and VALife at the same time. By law, only S-DVI and VALife is an either/or choice.

Does VALife Also Cover Family Members?

VALife does not cover spouses or

dependents of eligible Veterans.

Is There A Premium Waiver Option For VALife?

No, by law, there is no premium waiver option for VALife.

More Information

To learn more about VALife, visit the program website here: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>

AREA 9 DIRECTOR



by
Dana
Mclean

They Are Your Hours

Hello to all the area 9 offices. I hope this finds everyone healthy and in good spirits.

This fall has actually been fairly quiet when it comes to grievances. One office who actually reported going over the allotted 15 hour limit and one office that claimed 15 hours exactly but wasn't calculating when the postmaster actually logged on to the

RSS. REMEMBER . . . as soon as the postmaster signs on the RSS for the day, that is when the time begins and doesn't end until they do "end of day". This was already settled nationwide. Don't feel bad letting me know if it is happening. Those are YOUR hours!

Another issue I see happening is clerks not getting asked if they want to pick up more hours in other offices. Most of the time, IF an email is sent out to the offices, it doesn't go any further than the postmaster who

may not even ask you and just tell the inquiring office "no". If you're not getting 40 hours and would like to pick up more hours, please email me at danamcleanapwu@gmail.com. I'd like to get a list going so I know who to pay when a postmaster tells me there wasn't a PTF available. A lot of offices are needing help so if you are looking . . . you won't have to look far.

My job is to protect the clerk hours in the small offices. I take it serious and only have the clerks

best interest in mind. Its not to pick on a certain office or to "get" someone in trouble. It's to protect OUR work. Please keep that in mind when I email you questions. If anyone has any questions or complaints, don't hesitate to text or email me. (231) 638-7290 or danamcleanapwu@gmail.com.

I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas and New Year. Stay healthy and happy. Remember to take time with your family! Here's to 2023!

In solidarity.

AREA 11 DIRECTOR



by
Debora
Goodacre

A Fair Day's Pay For A Fair Day's Work

Hello everyone,
Hope you are all ready for even

more work during this month of December. Please stay safe by being alert, well rested and take your breaks when needed. Remember you are only one person and when you rush is when you make mistakes.

Article 34 in the Contract says a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Anyone who is having any problems with receiving breaks please contact me.

I would like thank those clerks

who have reached out to me with their issues and am glad i could resolve them. Sometimes all it takes is a phone call to your postmaster.

I hope you all have a great holiday and a happy new year.

National Business Agent



by
James
Stephenson

Obtaining Monetary Damages For Sexual Harassment And Or Hostile Work Grievances As Well As Refusals To Promptly Investigate

Many employees have been inquiring as to how we were successful in obtaining monetary relief for the victims of sexual harassment in a recent Arbitration the Union prevailed in on September 21, 2022. **The arbitration award No. was 1F-18C-1F-C-22123762 out of Palatine Illinois** (\$8,000.00 payment to victims). Sexual harassment and hostile work environments are prevalent problems in the USPS. Unfortunately, many of the victims and targets are our younger PSE employees whose complaints fall largely on deaf ears.

The USPS's indifferent and dismissive attitude and response to the victims' complaints is symbolic as to why so many women have to suffer such indignities in the workplace. They have become accustomed to knowing that their complaints will fall upon deaf ears. So, what do they do, they suffer in silence as they are mentally tortured every day. The USPS is filled with dusty ass old men who prey upon these young women who desire nothing more than to come to work, earn a living, provide for their family, and then go home but they cannot do that. It is a shame when a woman has to sit in her car for a few minutes to gather herself to enter a postal facility with the full knowledge that she is about to be harassed this day and the next day and the day after that.

Many people ask the question, "Why does she put up with that?" I would not take that. I would do this or I would do that." Easier said than done when you are a 23-year-old woman raising children or even a 40-year-old woman who desperately needs her USPS employment to survive. One word from a "spurned" supervisor and that is the end of your employment. A resourceful and vindictive official can find a multitude of methods to antagonize, make the workplace a living hell, or the worst-case scenario set into motion termination plans. These actions are sometimes carried out at arm's length by another supervisor in an effort to conceal the true source of the actions. When another supervisor carries out the harassment or retaliation for another management official this is called the "The Cat's Paw" discrimination doctrine.

A woman should never have to chose between working at the Post Office and being harassed or paying her rent. Being hired by the USPS should be the beginning of an exciting new career and opportunities, it should not be the beginning of a living nightmare with days filled with ogling, inappropriate comments, unwelcome advances, and supervisors with their togues hanging out of their mouths as you walk past.

One can never truly make the vic-

tims of sexual harassment and hostile work whole but the closest thing you can do is compensate them for their suffering. Compensating an employee (keeping in mind that sexual harassment is applicable to male victims also) for being the victim of sexual harassment is not a punitive award it is compensatory for both pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages. Non-pecuniary damages are for humiliation, depression, anger, frustration, embarrassment, etc.

Even though it is a management run investigation you want to ask for an IMIP (Initial Management Inquiry Process) per Publication 552 and Postal Bulletin 159. This investigation can also potentially uncover even more instances of harassment and hostile work. If the employer refuses to promptly investigate (which they often do) this will add to the damages. There is an excellent award on the issue of hostile work damages and a failure to investigate by Arbitrator Richard B. Danehy in E98C-4E-C-99297816 (August 23, 2007).

If the employer attempts to block the Union from proving sexual harassment and using the IMIP as evidence by claiming "confidentiality" then your response to that is what is called the "Faragher-Elleerth" defense which was an important decision rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court in Faragher

v. City of Boca Raton, 524 U.S. 775 (1998) and Burlington Industries, Inc. v. Ellerth, 524 U.S. 742 (1998). An example of lower courts using this doctrine and forcing the employer to provide a copy of the investigation is "Koss v. Palmer."

Koss v. Palmer Water Department broadly held that, when a defendant invokes a Faragher-Elleerth defense premised on the results of an internal investigation, *it "waives the attorney-client privilege and work product protections for not only the report itself, but as to any documents, witness interviews, notes and memoranda created during the course of an in furtherance of the investigation."* 977 F. Supp 2d (D. Mass. Oct. 7, 2013) (citing Angelone v. Xerox Corp., No. 09-CV-6019, 2011 WL 4473534, at *3 (W.D.N.Y. Sept. 26, 2011)). "Therefore, absent limited possible exceptions, given the employer's assertion of an affirmative defense that it exercised reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct harassing conduct, the defendants waived the privilege relating to the investigation documents. Id. at 30."

Another relevant case is Payton v. N.J. Turnpike Auth., 691 A.2d 321, 338 (N.J. Sup.Ct. 1997) finding that, "if the purpose of the investigation was simply to enforce the employer's

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by
Paul
Browning

RETIREE PRESIDENT

Up In The Air

Post Election Doldrums

After APWU National Officers elections in which almost 9 out of 10 of the over 190,000 APWU members did not bother to vote, APWU activists were understandably concerned about whether Union members would care enough to vote in 2022 Government elections that would decide the direction our Country is headed in. Fortunately, turnout among voters for elections in City, State, and Federal offices reached almost record numbers for a non-Presidential election year. So what was the result?

Election denier candidates left over from 2020 were defeated with the democratic process upheld and voter confidence in the electoral process restored (unless you're a conspiracy theorist who believes the Earth is really flat or some other HUH? can you prove that way out there idea). Cultural issues aside, the real question is will there being any actual governing of running the country happen? Well, if you liked the Clinton Benghazi hearings, you'll love Republicans in charge of the House of Representatives.

Get ready for vitriol spilled all over the House on Afghanistan, Dr. Fauci, Nancy Pelosi's fault for January 6 (seriously?), Hunter Biden's laptop etc. etc. As for any laws or legislation passed, forget about it. The only hope for real governing will lie in perhaps a few Republicans in the House deciding to join the Democratic minority and maybe pass some actual legislation having to do with the day to day operation of the Government.

For postal retirees, the outlook is bleak. A bill in the House that would have at least rolled back some of the Windfall Elimination Provision restored some Social Security benefits to CSRS retirees is now dead. The bill also would have changed the Government Pension Offset but that's not happening either. The bill, the Social Security Fairness Act, had 305 co-sponsors sign on to it in the House, but with a new Congress taking office in 2023 it will have to be re-introduced and start the endless Committee hearings all over again. And you can bet it will be way back in the line behind all the other Committee hearing mentioned above. As for any lame duck action on the bill, Republicans are too busy getting the knives out and sharpening them to do anything meaningful.

DeJoys Destruction

USPS Postmaster DeJoy continues to blow up the Post Office as any part of the community it serves. His planned Sorting and Distribution Cen-

ters (SDCs) are already being put into operation in parts of the country. So here we go again, another new amalgamation of letters of which postal big bosses are so fond of. MPOs, SCFs, P&DCs, P&DFs-if it's not broke, postal managers will find a way to break it.

SDCs are the latest postal management effort to remove more postal operations as far away as possible from the towns and cities that mail is delivered to. It's a "hub" operation with delivery in the spokes of the wheel. It's similar to way airline travel works. Funnel everything to a middle then branch out from there. And if you've ever traveled by plane with layovers you know how well that works.

Here in Michigan, a SDC is being built in Kalamazoo. Smaller Post Offices that used to have the mail for their community delivered to them for clerks and letter carriers to sort and deliver will see a seismic change in their operations which will have a drastic effect on postal workers. Mail for a smaller will now be worked up at the SDC. Clerks in the smaller office won't have anything to do with it. Letter carriers from those offices will have to travel to the SDC to pick up their mail and back out to the area they came from to deliver the mail.

I spoke to a postal employee in a small Post Office in my home 496 zip code area. The person works in an office with 3 clerks and 3 letter carriers. The tentative future plan is for the letter carriers to just leave their homes, drive their private vehicles to

a postal building in Traverse City, pick up their sorted mail, deliver it, then return to Traverse City. I don't know if they would even stop in the Post Office that serves the area they deliver to. It's going to mean more drive time to work for the carriers and leave less work for the clerks in the small office.

Some areas around the Country are already starting to protest the change. Congressman Fred Upton of Kalamazoo and local government officials are calling upon residents to raise the hue and cry to PMG DeJoy through letters and even public demonstrations to raise awareness. Though PMG DeJoy has declared his I don't care attitude to a Congressional Committee with his earlier statements of "Get used to me" and his intent to be at USPS for a "long time", let's not forget the influence of public and especially political pressure.

It was Union backed "Stop Staples" boycotts led by the APWU and a ruling by National Labor Relations Board that halted retail sales of postal products at Staples office supply stores. Us old timers remember the boycott of Sears Roebuck Company and their Discover credit card when USPS and Sears entered into an agreement to sell Postal Service products in 1988. Just like Staples, Sears gave it up and ceased any retail postal operations.

While there is no one to boycott here, there are two vacancies that will exist on the USPS Board Of Governors in December 22 when the sev-

en year terms of two BOG members expire although they could be nominated for a so-called "carryover" year. These two Donald Trump appointed members have both supported PMG DeJoy's plans and it would be a relief to see them gone. Now, its President Joe Biden who will nominate their successors and two in particular names have already been floated for nomination.

Former Congresswomen Carolyn Maloney of New York and Brenda Lawrence of Michigan have both thrown their names into the hat for BOG positions. Maloney was instrumental in shepherding through the recent Postal Reform Act that forgave the ridiculous pre-funding of postal retiree health care. Lawrence actually worked at USPS for 30 years as a clerk, letter carrier, human resources manager. I'll give her a pass on the last one, there does exist an occasional HR manager who is helpful.

Certainly there will be objections from those on the right and left of the political spectrum that the women aren't ideal candidates. Also, any new appointments are subject to a Congressional approval process. It is still a better shot at getting at BOG members who care about USPS as the U.S. Constitutionally intended universal government service rather having than more banker/business types who are more concerned with Wall Street than Main Street.

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Justice For All

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suffer from asthma or other conditions that if the air is bad today, stay inside and take it easy. But it can also help influence planning decisions: things like which neighborhoods might need more green space or fewer idling trucks.

Due to its history of heavy industry, Southwest Detroit has the most air monitors in the city. But there's another burgeoning industrial hotspot on Detroit's east side, where there are far fewer monitors.

Filling In Gaps On The East Side

The Rev. Sharon Buttry and Mark Covington are trying to change that. I met them recently at the Georgia Street Community Collective, an urban farm and community center that Covington has run for the past 15 years.

It's a lovely sanctuary in a pretty blighted neighborhood. Covington said it's not zoned for industry, but there are scrap yards, concrete crushing, and the area has seen a resurgence of auto factories and parts suppliers in recent years.

With those businesses came truck

traffic. A lot of truck traffic. "I always holler and scream at the trucks. Say 'You're not supposed to be down here!'" Covington told me, chuckling.

Covington and Buttry teamed up in 2016, when the nearby U.S. Ecology hazardous waste facility wanted to expand. "We just really believed that the community was already overburdened with facilities and industry. This was not the place or time to be adding more," Buttry said.

The expansion happened anyway, but Buttry and Covington didn't quit. They created the Detroit-Hamtramck Coalition for Advancing Healthy Environments. And they're planning a community health study that will take a close look at the intersection between environmental issues and health in three east side ZIP codes.

"This area has much higher hospitalizations for asthma, for preterm births, for low birth weight," Buttry said. "You've got a lot of [health] indicators that are highly elevated in ... this area."

"In conversations with people, you hear about more people being sick with all types of things: breathing ail-

ments, cancer," Covington added. "So, something is happening."

Buttry said it's tricky to tie air pollution directly to particular health outcomes. But she thinks if they can do that kind of study, the state should be able to do it too — and maybe reconsider permitting decisions in already-overburdened areas.

Oh, and tucked in among the plants, goats, and pigs at Georgia Street? An air monitor. One more data point in a community-driven network that could change the story of air pollution in Detroit.

End Of Story.

I will leave you all with one more passage from Reverend Barber's book, "The Third Reconstruction"

"Jesus' insistence that we love our enemies is more than an ethical ideal. In the struggle for human freedom, it is also a practical necessity. If love does not drive out the fears that so easily divide us, we will never gather together in coalitions strong enough to challenge those who benefit from injustice"

— Reverend Doctor William Barber
In Solidarity.



by
Linda
Turney

National Business Agent

Being Grateful

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

The four freedoms outlined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and painted by Rockwell are: Freedom of Speech, Freedom to Worship, Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear. Unions and the millions of free people that we represent believe in freedom and human rights everywhere. Our efforts go to those who

struggle to gain these rights while you and I continue that struggle to keep these rights.

I am grateful for my Union job that has given so much to me and my family, freedom from want. I say this in a time where massive poverty and inequality of wages have become a threat to the American dream. We are presently living in an economy of exclusion. Even Pope Francis recognized that "trickle-down theory" gives crude and naïve trust to the goodness of people at the top wielding economic power will pass down economic free-

dom higher wages and benefits to the masses. Trickle-down has been proven wrong. Poverty continues to exist, yet the belief in fundamental human rights such as "freedom from want" persist.

This past year, you re-elected me as your National Business Agent for another term. Elections are a celebration of Democracy and APWU has big challenges ahead. I will continue to be involved in arbitration, legislation, education, communication and representation. I am giving thanks for the opportunity to serve you in

a struggle that I so passionately believe in.

I hope that your holidays are blessed with multitudes of family and friends. Thank you for your activism and membership in our great Union. Thank you for your hard work, generosity and most of all our friendship, which is so important to me. I am grateful for the opportunity to ensure that workers have a voice in their workplace. Workers should be treated with dignity and have a decent standard of living and healthcare, "freedom from want".

Up In The Air

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Retiree Health Care, What's Going On???

The Postal Service recently mailed to retirees a newsletter regarding the Postal Service Health (PSHB) Benefits program. The PSHB was created by the passage of the Postal Reform Act which has been written about extensively by myself and others from the local to National Union level. Indeed, many

telecons and Zoom meetings were held with APWU retirees and APWU National President Mark Dimondstein, APWU Legislative Director, and APWU Retirees Department Director Nancy Olumekor. All three officers, reelected to their APWU positions in October 2022, campaigned heavily for passage of the Act. Retirees were encouraged numerous times to contact their Congressional representatives for support of the

Act whose primary purpose was to forgive the pre-funding health care mandate that created billions of dollars of USPS debt.

In return for the debt forgiveness, postal employees retiring AFTER JANUARY 1, 2025 HAVE to participate in Medicare Part B and pay the premium for it, currently around \$150 for one individual. It was a tradeoff that kicked the can down the street to future postal retirees. Now, what's

causing confusion among those APWU members already retired is the new PSHB.

The subject USPS newsletter states "What to know right now" that "Postal Service annuitants must enroll in a PSHB plan during the PSHB Program Open Season in late 2024. Postal Service employees and annuitants currently enrolled in FEHB plans who do not enroll in a new PSHB plan during Open Season in 2024 will automatically be enrolled in a PSHB plan." Well, that's the headscratcher because here's what the APWU website and magazine have to say-Current and retired employees remain in FEHB.

So, do I get to keep my same APWU UHC insurance I have now in 2025? What about those retirees currently in other FEHBPs? I'm confused along with other retirees I've spoken to. At least we have until 2024 for someone to explain this to us.

Late Breaking News On Retiree Health Care

As I was preparing to send this article in by my December 2 deadline to *Michigan Messenger* Editor John Greathouse I was able to speak with Legislative Director Judy Beard and Retirees Director Nancy Olumekor. Both assured me that the USPS newsletter is **misleading**. To clarify-Postal retirees and employees **need take no action in 2022 or 2023 to keep their present FEHB plan**. As for the 2024 Open Season for Health Care plans in 2025, employees and retirees will still be able to maintain their current choice of the major FEHB plans be it APWU, BC/BS, GEHA, ETC. So yes, I can keep my APWU UHC plan in 2025 to answer my own question.

Further meetings are planned with the four postal unions, USPS, and the Office of Personnel Management to make this clear to everyone. APWU will publicize their results in the very near future and let members know of any misinformation supplied by the Postal Service.

Obtaining Monetary Damages For Sexual Harassment And Or Hostile Work Grievances As Well As Refusals To Promptly Investigate

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anti-harassment policy or to comply with its legal duty to investigate and to remedy the allegations, then the privilege would not apply." Brothers and Sisters, the IMIP under Publication 552 is an investigation to enforce the employer's (USPS) anti-harassment policy.

Please keep in mind that the Union is entitled to confidential documents in their representative role in particular when the information is necessary for the enforcement of the CBA and which cover working conditions and wages. Sexual harassment and hostile work

fall under "working conditions."

The issue of confidentiality and requested information was clearly addressed by the parties in the collective bargaining agreement. The USPS and the APWU were both aware that the Union is entitled to "confidential" information which is why the parties agreed to this dispositive disclaimer in the CBA:

JCIM Page 185 Article 31.3 Information:

Article 31.3 provides that the Postal Service will make available to the Union all relevant information necessary for collective bargaining or the enforcement, administration or interpretation of the Agreement, including information necessary to determine whether to file or to continue the processing of a grievance. It also recognizes the Union's legal right to Employer information under the National Labor Relations Act.

"When the Union is provided with information, for example medical records, it is subject to the same rules of confidentiality as the Postal Service."

Medical Records, Inspector's Memorandums, OIG reports, Threat assessment reports (TAT reports), are all confidential reports that must be provided to the Union even without an employees consent or waiver. Even the form 3971 is a private and

confidential document by federal law but look at what it says on the back of the 3971:

"Privacy Act Statement: Your information will be used to administer leave. Collection is authorized by 39 USC 401, 404, 1001, 1003 and 1005; and 29 USC 2601 et. Providing the information is voluntary, but if not provided, we may not process your request. Your information may be disclosed as follows: in relevant legal proceedings; to law enforcement when the USPS or requesting agency becomes aware of a violation of law; to a congressional office at your request; to entities under contract with the USPS and/or authorized to perform audits; to labor organizations as required by law; to government agencies regarding personnel matters; and to the EEOC; MSPB or Office of Special Counsel."

The employer would have you believe that the Union has no more rights to confidential information than does a regular employee or even someone off the streets. Federal Courts, the National Labor Relations Board, and the vast chorus of arbitrators are completely aware that the Union is equal to the employer in the grievance procedure and is entitled to any and all relevant information even information deemed to be confidential.

In Solidarity.





— Scabs —

by Thomas Lothamer,
Associate Office Representative
Southwest Michigan Area Local
American Postal Workers Union -
AFL-CIO

What Is A Scabs?

"1: a worker who refuses to join a labor union. 2: a union member who refuses to strike or returns to work before a strike has ended. 3: a worker who accepts employment or replaces a union worker during a strike: strike-breaker"

(<http://www.merriam-webster.com>)

The formation of the American Federal of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was formed in 1955. Unions themselves are older than this of course but Unions as we know them today all began during this era.

"A worker who accepts employment or replaces a union worker during a strike" These are heavy words, blood has been spilled, lives have been lost over these words. This over the course of just a couple of generations. Being a student of the movement and having made it my life's work there has been an evolution of the word scab.

We as Postal Workers have several Unions within the system that we work, for those of us in the Associate Offices we primarily have APWU for Clerks, Custodians/Maintenance, NALC for city carriers and the Rural union.



even if they did bring potato salad to a potluck or bought doughnuts on Saturday. They get your cell number and then misuse it; you are not even re-

three crafts.

The APWU and NALC in my opinion has always held mutual respect and boundaries for each other's craft.

pay dues then they are **Scabs** as well. That goes for any non-dues paying member of any craft. If you are putting food on your table off of the backs of the people who are paying dues and you are not then you are **Scabs** as well.

In Associate Offices there may be one or two clerks working the mail that comes in on various trucks. Parcels, letters, flats, etc. It's all distribution and the Clerk's mail until it has ALL been distributed to the carrier's cases. This is a process, there is absolutely no reason a carrier should withdraw their mail during distribution. This slows down the process, creates a safety issue and crosses craft lines. **DON'T BE A SCAB!** Do not sort mail for any reason to other crafts even miss throws belong to the Clerk Craft, if you perform this work, **YOU ARE A SCAB!** This goes for the afternoon when there are parcels, flats, etc. . . . waiting to be broken down and distributed. This is not carrier work. Leave it for the Clerks. Rural subs are hourly and are selfish in many regards or just plain ignorant to the rules if they are performing this Clerk work. This is a **Scab!** The Clerks have families to feed as well, some may say they don't care or don't want the work but this is wrong too. Clerk hours are always being budgeted down from year to year due to this behavior. You may not want to quarrel amongst each other over this topic but this is about livelihood. In many cases it is the difference between part time career for a clerk and full-time

career. Rural subs are not career and therefore they lie, cheat whatever to steal money from the clerks in that office. Learn your jobs and your boundaries, have some integrity.

Managers are going to let you do clerk work more often than not because you are making their job easier for them, don't let them. I'm sorry for the Rurals and how poorly they are trained and represented. You guys drew the short straw but that doesn't mean steal from your coworker. Don't be a **Scab**.

When It Comes To Solidarity

1. sol-i-dar-i-ty
[sälə'derədē]

NOUN

solidarity
(noun) · Solidarity (noun)

1. unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group:

When it comes to solidarity, our common goal in Associate Offices is to be united against management. Why? Because they lie, they lie about all of the contractual things that they should be truthful about, your hours, your pay, your training, working conditions, the color of the asbestos floor you are working on. You are a number on a page of data, so easily replaced

quired to give them this information.

I'm getting a little off of topic, my point is that our solidarity is from our common goal of better contractually agreed life for us and our families. Those of us that understand what it is I am saying would never cross a picket line to take work from another person, in the Post Office this also translates to performing the work of our brothers and sisters of another craft. We have fought hard for our contractual language and work guarantees. Vacations, raises, seniority, right to safe working conditions, many of these we have common interests between the

The APWU and NALC in my opinion has always held mutual respect and boundaries for each other's craft. By working together over the years, we have helped each other's staffing, safety, solidarity.

By working together over the years, we have helped each other's staffing, safety, solidarity.

The **Scabs** of this story are unfortunately the Rural craft, The career Rural are seldom an issue because they have their contract, they come in and do their work and then leave unless they are just anti-union and don't





by Eric
Chornoby

Union Email:
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It's Anything But A Holly, Jolly Christmas

EAP Really Is 4 YOU

EAP (Employee Assistance Program) has a bad reputation. Since its from the Postal Service, and Management recommends it, you don't trust EAP. I understand that feeling. But as a Union Steward, its one of the few things Management gets right. With, of course, the Unions help.

I know what you are thinking, 'C'mon Eric, EAP? They will tell Management about my personal business!' Luckily,

employee's voluntary participation in EAP counseling should be given favorable consideration in disciplinary action . . ."

EAP is a tool I use in a lot of grievances. No one needs to know why you go. We simply care you get help.

What Does EAP Offer?

The better question is what *doesn't* EAP offer. EAP offers help for personal and job related issues. Your first contact to EAP is a Counselor. That Counselor

price and areas and I was provided a list via email after a couple days. The Counselor made calls to apartment buildings, confirmed prices and availability.

If you need to talk to someone about your job, spouse, grief, stress, loss, etc, the hardest part is therapist shopping. Finding someone you can open up with is very difficult. Your EAP Counselor will refer you to someone who they think you will match with if needed. Saving hundreds of dollars and hours of useless sessions if you did it on your own.

EAP does everything you can think of. Publication 519 is only the tip of the iceberg. Plus the EAP website, www.eap4you.com, has a lot of self guided resources. Legal, financial, mental health, child care, elder care, etc. EAP covers it all.

Who Pays For It?

The Post Office of course. Its actually better than paid for. They pay you. Your first EAP session can be on the clock. At your option. You don't need to tell Management about going to EAP, but if you do, the time you are with the Counselor is paid for the first appointment. This means that even if you don't know if they can help it is a little time off of work to figure that out for yourself.

Apart from the first on the clock appointment, EAP includes six session per incident. An incident is simply a traumatic experience or event. If six is not enough, the EAP professional can extent an additional six sessions for free. After that you can ask to stay on as a client or be referred to someone else if your insurance doesn't cover the therapist.

If you go to see EAP and exhaust all six session for depression, for example, but six months later you start feeling depressed again, it can be a new event. That means another paid, on the clock meeting with a Counselor and no cost follow up visits.

The Christmas Blues

Peak Season is hard on everyone. It is more work than any other time of year. More angry customers. More hours. More stress. No matter why it is hard for you, EAP is a useful tool, especially this time of year and its aftermath.

I tell my members that, at worst, EAP can be a paid hour off the phones to talk to someone and if the Counselor thinks they can help, you will get help. If not, they will find someone who can. After getting yelled at, called profane names, and insulted dozens of times a day, sometimes talking to someone makes all the difference.

As a Steward, EAP is a tool I recommend to help defend against discipline but is also a tool I know can actually help people. Next time you have the Christmas Blues, or you don't know how to handle the ups and downs of life, call EAP. No one should hate the holiday season.



that is not true.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement allows APWU input in the EAP program, along with other Postal Unions. Districts have committees, and although they vary, your Union has input. EAP is also run by the Federal Occupational Health Service. Counselors are contractors. Not Postal Employees.

These are licensed Counselors by their state and are held to the legal obligations of any therapist. Unless you plan to hurt someone else, it is confidential. Information can only be shared if you request it. Something Management isn't keen to tell you is EAP also helps the Union fight your discipline, to quote ELM 871, "Although an em-

will hear you out, and determine how they can help you and assist in making a treatment plan. If you need a therapist, they will offer to take you on or refer you to another professional. Its a best person for the job approach.

Lets say you are trying to quit smoking, the EAP Counselor will refer you to free resources like the EAP website, provide information, and possibly therapy. If you are struggling to deal with work stress, EAP will find a therapist or a professional to work with. Only after they hear why you feel work stress.

Using me as an example, I had to abruptly move a couple years ago and contacted EAP to help me find apartments. I told the Counselor my desired



Ceremonial wreaths sit at the Fort Richardson National Cemetery on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Dec. 19, 2021. Wreaths Across America honors military members and their families, and remembers those who served. The event has participating members' place wreaths on fallen service members' gravestones, and also displays ceremonial wreaths for each branch of service. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Mario Calabro)