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# WMAL VOICE



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WESTERN MICHIGAN AREA LOCAL,  
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO



# WMAL Voice

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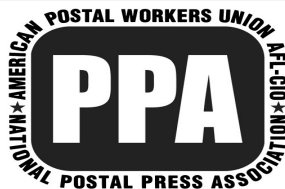
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HR SHARED SERVICES CENTER	877-477-3273 <i>option 5</i>
VETERAN'S CRISIS LINE	800-273-8255

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**Editorial Policy:** Submissions are welcome from all APWU members, sent to the address or email listed above. In accordance with the local constitution, the editor reserves the right to determine if material submitted to this publication shall be printed, and reserves the right to edit as needed for space and clarity. The views and opinions expressed within are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the editor, local officers, or the APWU. All material must be signed, though names may be withheld upon request. The WMAL Voice is published bimonthly.

As of March 2005, a policy was instated to publish member condolences, births, marriages, and anniversaries. Please let me know at **wmalvoice@gmail.com** of anything you would like included. Pictures are welcomed!

# The Local Lowdown

by Amy Puhalski

Greetings Brothers and Sisters, Our National Negotiations Team and the United States Postal Service have agreed on a tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement. This tentative agreement will be sent to every member of the APWU to vote on. We have the ultimate say. With that being said, I am requesting that you take the time to read and educate yourself on what was negotiated for us. So many times, it's easier to listen to others on the workroom floor that are giving you their opinion. This is your contract which affects your wages and working conditions. The contract does not go in effect until it is ratified by the membership. If by chance the membership votes it down, we head back to arbitration and like every other arbitration you never know what you will get. Sometimes you think you have the best case, and it goes in the opposite direction. Please visit apwu.org and review all the negotiated benefits that come with this tentative agreement. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask. If we do not know the answer we will reach out and get the answers.

**204b's-** The USPS in our area continues to utilize 204b's in lieu of our Lead Clerks. We are filing on those that we are aware of. If you have a 204b in your office, please reach out to the union office and report it. Many times, management hides them, and we do not find out until it is too late. Improper usage of 204b's is work that belongs to the craft.

**3971's-** Just a reminder that when you submit a leave request on a 3971's have management sign that they received your request and make a copy. Most of our Local Memorandums of Understanding have a specific time frame that management must return your 3971's to you. We see all to often they return them late yet there is no evidence of when the slip was turned in. We hold the burden of proof so please make sure you keep a copy. Also, if you call off when you return to work, please ensure you submit a 3971 for the leave you requested. I often tell employees not to wait around for management to bring you a slip. This is your leave request, and you should be responsible for ensuring they receive your leave request, and you are input for what you requested at the time of your call in. If you choose to wait and sign the 3971 when management bring it to you then at least ensure the information on the 3971 is correct. If it is not, then complete a new with the correct information on it.

Management continues to perform bargaining unit work daily in the Grand Rapids Installation. Again, this is your work. You need to protect it. When you see management doing your work you need to ask for a steward and report it. Not only do we file for pay but we also file for those hours to be returned to the craft. Work hours mean jobs. If you continue to allow them to work side by side with you and perform your work sooner or later, it may lead into them taking craft jobs away.

**Injured on Duty-** I am fielding many complaints from the work-

room floors that management is taking a blind eye to on-the-job injuries. Upper management is training their new supervisors and 204b's how to perform craft work, but they are failing to train them on the tools they need to be a supervisor. Many of the supervisors have no clue on how to process an on-the-job injury. That does nothing more than reiterate what I have always stated. Management does not care if you injury yourself. You need to protect yourself and your family. This is your livelihood and each and everyone of us is replaceable in the USPS eyes. It's sad but it's a reality. If you are injured on duty you need to report it to your supervisor as soon as possible. If they have no clue on what to do, please call the union office immediately so we can assist to ensure that you receive proper treatment and pay. The phone numbers to all the union offices and officers are in this newsletter.

**Requesting a steward-** When you request a steward management must release you immediately possible but no later than 2 hours after you request. If this is not happening, you need to file a grievance. Please make sure you document when you requested and when you were released if it is beyond the 2-hour time frame. If they continue to deny you a steward, please call the office. Leave your name, office, and a contact number. We will call you back and ensure you receive a steward, file the appropriate grievances, and assist you in file charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

**Positive COVID Test-** We have included in this newsletter the language on what to do if you test positive for COVID and how to file a workman's comp claim. Please read the information and stay informed.

**Maintenance Craft Director-** We finally have a new Maintenance Craft Director. Welcome Ryan DeShaw and thank you for stepping up to represent the maintenance craft. Ryan works T-1 at the Grand Rapids Main office however he is the maintenance craft director, so he represents all maintenance employees in every office our local represents.

In Solidarity,

Amy





## Just The Facts!

by Michelle Mack

1. **NO**, Management is not allowed to do bargaining unit work! Article 1.6 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement is very clear. So, where are all the statements from the Membership??? Use your voice!

Details for the statements

should fill the gaps as to the *where, what, when, why, and who*. Be descriptive: the date, specific machine, exact times that Management did our work, etc. **STAND UP FOR YOUR JOB! SILENCE IS A JOB KILLER!**

2. **NO**, you should not be running a machine by yourself. If you're instructed by a Supervisor/MDO to run the machine (DBCS/DIOSS) by yourself, follow your instruction, ask for a steward right away! Management has 2 hours to get you a steward. If you do not receive one in that time frame, ask again. The acceptable criteria for running a machine by yourself is if your partner went to the restroom, residue run, or your partner is running a few minutes late. Notice I said minutes, **not hours!!!** This is a local settlement that was made in 2020 by myself and my counterpart in Labor Relations. At a minimum, any employee feeding mail and running by themselves needs to fill out a statement with the union as to how long they ran alone, what machine, and a timely grievance will be filed to get them 50% more pay for that time. **\*\*Note, this does not apply if you are sweeping and pulling down the DBCS by yourself. Only if you are feeding and sweeping by yourself are you eligible for 50% more pay.**

3. "How do I ask for a steward?" Find your immediate Supervisor and say, "I would like to see a steward." Note the time and ask again if 2 hours passes and one is not made available. When the Supervisor is able, they will release you to come to the Union office. They can ask why you need a steward. You can tell them Article 37 (Clerk craft), Article 38 (Maintenance craft), or Article 39 (Motor Vehicles).

4. "I'm not on the Overtime Desired List. Why am I getting overtime?" Management can force non-listers up to 56 hrs/wk (CBA) to stay overtime by **juniority (rotating basis)** only if **all available** employees on the OTDL have worked 12 hours day/60 in a week.

5. If you get pulled in by Management for a PDI or an In-

vestigative Interview, ask for your steward. Some supervisors may have one present, and others will not. Federal Labor law gives each employee the right to representation during any Investigatory Interview in which the employee reasonably believes may lead to discipline. These are your Weingarten Rights. A steward cannot exercise Weingarten Rights on the employee's behalf. Exercise your right and ask for your steward!

6. "I received discipline a few days after a Pre-disciplinary Interview. What should I do?" Ask for your steward. The Union has 14 days after you receive discipline to file a Step 1 with Management. Please do not wait to bring it to us. We have an investigation to do and cannot do a proper one if time does not allow. Help us to help you and bring the discipline to us as soon as able. There are plenty of members that don't ask for a steward. If your discipline is not grieved or settled by the Union, it is on your record for 2 years. **OUCH!!!** We can only help if you notify us.

7. It's easy to call or text a member of the Executive board, however, you should be asking for your steward and going through the proper channels. We have our days off, scheduled annual leave and value our time away just like you. Please be mindful of that. If a steward does not have the answers to your questions, they will reach out to the board to get assistance. Please be patient. We are dealing with many cases, daily, and will get to you as soon as possible.

8. If you see me walking through the GMF on Tour 3 or Tour 1 and wave me over, please make sure to keep doing your job. I do not mind stopping and answering a quick question, but if it is something more in depth, please ask for a steward and come see me. I'll be happy to help you in any way I can.

I hope these facts have helped to inform all of you about your rights as members. It is imperative that we all do our part to keep the Western Michigan Area Local (WMAL) strong through 2022 and beyond!

In solidarity,

Michelle



## ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE!

by Lisa Borchardt

Through collective bargaining, legislative action and mobilization of its members and the public, the APWU fights for dignity and respect on the job for postal workers throughout the postal industry—for decent pay and benefits and safe working places, for defense of the right of the people to public postal services and for solidarity with all workers, at home and abroad.

A union is defined as a club, society, or association formed by people with a common interest or purpose. The APWU has had many campaign slogans for rights we are fighting for....."US Mail is not for sale!"....."Fighting today for a better tomorrow!"....."Stand up for Safe Jobs!"....."Save the Post Office"....."The Grand Alliance to save our public Post Office"....."APWU our union, our contract, our future!"

I hear many people say it doesn't matter to me, they won't take my job away. Everything should matter to each one of us! If they don't take your job away, they may take someone else's. That will still be less clerk jobs! We all need this Postal Service to stay viable. Even if you are close to retire-

ment. Who do you think is going to pay your retirement if the postal service goes under or becomes a private industry? No one! Your retirement may go away with the service!

We as clerks need to care about our collective jobs! We need to care about each other! If you see something wrong, speak up and let a steward know. We cannot fight what we do not know about! The strength of the union comes from the collective group of all of us. Not just one of us. So please think....one for all and all for one!

Lisa

*\*\*Any questions about filing an OWCP Claims for COVID-19 referenced on pages 8 & 9, please reach out to Lisa!\*\**



## UNION-MADE SNACKS

### Beer

- Blue Moon
- Budweiser
- Busch
- Keystone Light
- Michelob
- Mickey's
- Miller
- Pabst Blue Ribbon
- Red Stripe
- Shock Top
- Steel Reserve
- Steelhead
- Stegmaier
- Stella Artois

**AFLCIO.ORG/SUPERBOWL**

### Snacks

- Chex Mix
- Doritos
- Fritos
- Lay's
- Pirate's Booty
- Smartfood Popcorn
- Rice Krispies Treats
- Rold Gold Pretzels
- Ruffles
- Bugles
- Cheetos
- Cheez-It

AFL-CIO



## If You're Going To Be Something, Be The Good!

by Michael Greene

Greetings all! I have to say I was kind of torn on how I want to approach my initial article as the new editor. When you take on this position, there are a lot of rules in place. Guidelines. Red flags. Making sure to write to not offend anyone, etc. I enjoy writing and have a habit of going all over. Anything

I write is my opinion or based on my personal experience. Hopefully, I can spark a thought or at least entertain you when I contribute an article.

On the cover photo was a rock I came across while on a day trip in Ludington (water junkie here - the peaceful vibes and energy help to fill my soul). The rock was near the pier, and I just happened to catch it out of the corner of my eye. "Be the good." Truthfully, I wanted to grab it and take it with me because I'm drawn to positive energy. But I really appreciated the feeling it gave me and thought there could be someone coming behind me who could use that reminder as well. The reminder to try to have a different energy in life. There's plenty of negativity and divisiveness around us each day. The less we have each day, the better off we can be.

We all know about COVID-19 and the varying opinions. I don't judge anyone for choosing to get the vaccine or not. It's your choice, and you should exercise the freedom you have in this country to walk your path. I also believe you should be considerate others. What you choose to do outside of the workplace is your business, but when you arrive for work, be respectful of your coworkers. You don't know what they're dealing with, and they may not either. It doesn't take much to at least give the recommended distance if you're choosing not to mask or get vaccinated. (On a side note, no, the vaccine nor booster are 100% guaranteed. However, neither is a seatbelt, but you'd like your chances better wearing one than not if you got into a severe car crash). One way or another, let's all try to get through this as best we can.

A bit of transparency (and I'm sure Amy doesn't mind me saying because neither of us are dishonest people): the reason I stepped into the editor position is because no one else showed an interest. I've volunteered my time with committee work, offer to help when the union is short-handed, and I make it a point to attend our union meetings when they are scheduled. Typically, there is not a lot of participation. I'm not sure the reason, but I see the effects. Our Union works hard for us. Very hard. But without them at the front line fighting for our jobs and work, where would we be? Kellogg's was in the news recently because of a union strike. Their employees were fighting for fair treatment after being overworked and mistreated during the Essential Workers Only time period. Kellogg's had planned to reward them for their hard work by shipping jobs to Mexico, but public

support and their strong union helped to stop those plans. If you're reading this newsletter, you're a part of our union, and I salute you for it. Stay in and remain in. Attend meetings when you can. Understand what is taking place, ask helpful questions to the board and even get a chance to win money (there are door prizes and a chance to win the 50/50 COPA raffle). Volunteer when the opportunity arises. The union works so that we can enjoy the benefits and jobs that we have. The more people lifting, the lighter the load gets. "Be the good!"

I hope you have patience with me as I learn my new responsibilities. This is a bit different than what I'm accustomed to, but I'll figure it out. I try to look at change as a good thing. It facilitates growth in you if you are open to it. Some of it may work, some may not. We shall see - falling on my face has never discouraged me before. If you have feedback, feel free to email me or if you see me at work and recognize me from the photo (minus my dog - rarely do I take pictures by myself because I can't seem to pull them off very well!) please share them with me. I'm hoping to make this educational and entertaining at the same time.

I'm going to include a few brief workout tips or challenges here going forward. I often hear people at work say how they want to lose weight or improve their health, but they don't have a plan, consistency or they don't see the changes fast enough with the workouts. Realistically it takes time, but it is possible because it only requires a commitment to change your mindset.

First, don't miss meals. You must retrain your metabolism to work properly & for that, you need food (aka fuel). Don't run away from carbs or protein. Two, up your water intake. It helps to keep your organs working properly and you hydrated. Three, get enough sleep. Rest helps you to recover. Four, start off small. Don't think you can jump back in full blast. Work on stretching (15 - 30 second holds) and walking (do this at a good clip for at least 30 mins a day or if you're at a gym make sure to incline that treadmill. It will get your heart rate up faster). Side note: make sure you've consulted your doctor to make sure you have the green light to start this.

Next article I'll have a challenge in place. In the meantime, let's improve our eating and our mindset. Increase your endurance by walking consistently. If you can't make it outdoors to improve your cardio, try active stepping (I think you can find some videos on YouTube for challenging movements to start). Who you were is not who you are if you commit to it. Good luck and let's work to improve our path!

Michael

# What Does The UNION Do For Me?

by Mark Ferrari, Local Business Agent, Milwaukee, WI Area Local APWU, AFL-CIO

Below are some examples of what APWU represented career (and non-career) employees are guaranteed as compared to what they would reasonably expect to get without the union bargaining for us. See below examples and remember if you ask "what does the UNION do for me?" The answer is very lengthy.

<u>Current Rules for APWU Career Represented Employees</u>	<u>vs. Without the UNION</u>
<u>Pay:</u> Competitive or well above similar private sector Jobs.	vs. Much lower pay.
<u>Pay Raises:</u> Guaranteed under the UNION contract.	vs. No guarantees. Keep your fingers Crossed. Kissing butts is no guarantee.
<u>Scheduling for Overtime &amp; Holidays:</u> Fair rules under the UNION contract. Volunteers take precedence.	vs. Whoever management wants to work-or not work. Hopefully the boss likes you....
<u>Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA):</u> Guaranteed under the UNION contract.	vs. None. The only COLA you get is the kind that you drink.
<u>Time and a half:</u> Paid for working over 8 hours in a day and/or for working first off day.	vs. Paid only if working over 40 hours in a week.
<u>Double Time Pay:</u> Over 10 hours on a regular day and/or working second off day.	vs. HA! What's that?
<u>Retirement Plan:</u> Pension and Thrift Savings Plan	vs. No pension. Maybe a 401k plan if you are lucky.
<u>Bidding/Applying for jobs:</u> Seniority/Agreed to qualification qualification rules.	vs. Whomever management wants. keep your fingers crossed. Kissing butt is no guarantee.
<u>Annual Leave:</u> Generous amount given. Guaranteed amount of employee allowed off per day.	vs. Much less. Only given if management agrees to let you have off. No guarantees.
<u>Missing work due to sickness:</u> Up to 104 sick leave hours per year. FMLA per year. FMLA rights are enforced. 80 hours of sick leave dependent care given. Sick leave can be advanced in some situations.	vs. Very little given. FMLA. rights are often ignored. No advancement of sick leave.
<u>Subcontracting:</u> Rules that prohibit and limit subcontracting that helps protect postal employee jobs.	vs. No rules. Could affect postal Jobs. See next item below.
<u>Layoffs:</u> Not allowed under the UNION negotiated contract.	vs. You can be laid off. Find a new job if you can. Good luck finding one with the current pay/benefits you get now.
<u>Grievances:</u> The UNION investigates and files grievances when necessary to correct any problems with your contractual rights.	vs. No contract to follow. Rules can can change day to day and you have no recourse to be compensated when wronged.
<u>Congress:</u> UNION lobbies Congress on legislation that is important to postal workers and the USPS.	vs. Congress will make their decisions decisions solely based on what they receive from groups/competitors who want to harm the USPS.
<u>Postal Support Employees:</u> Good pay, annual leave, pay increases, health insurance, path to career status, rights to grievance procedure. Right to challenge discipline.	vs. Much lower pay, no vacation time, no health insurance, no path to career employment. No grievance procedure. Little right to challenge discipline.

*And there you have it Brothers and Sisters,.....as predicated by your Union leadership.*

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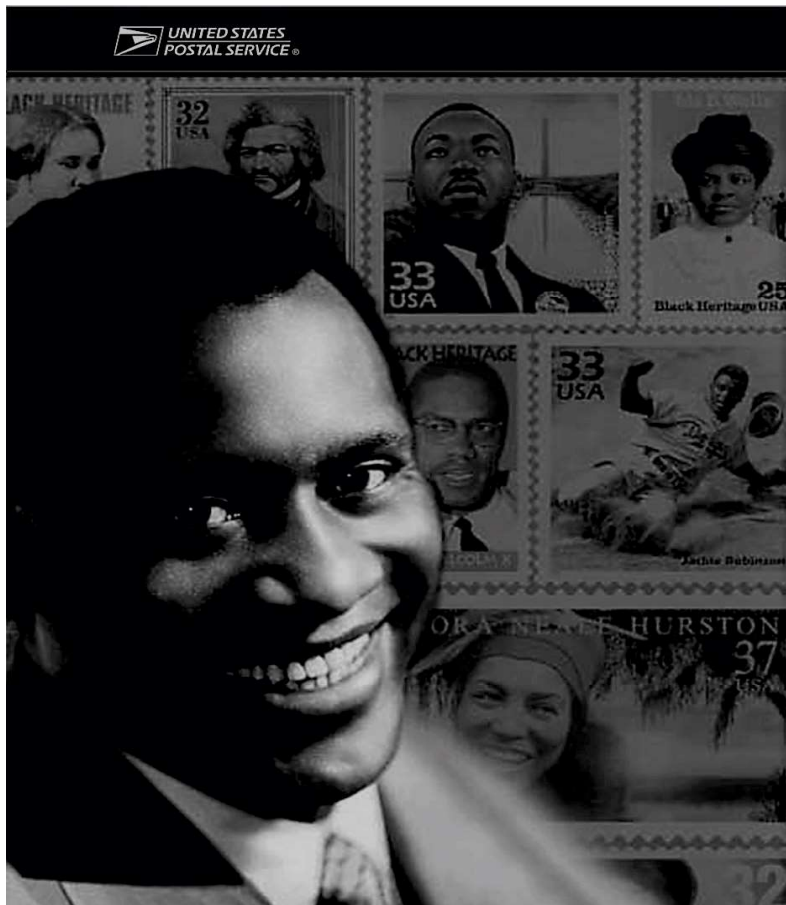


*"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom."*

- Martin Luther King Jr.

## Celebrating Black History Month

**APWU**



### GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER



George Washington Carver improved the quality of life for millions of people through his scientific contributions in agriculture. The many products he developed from peanuts, sweet potatoes, and soybeans helped relieve southern agriculture of one-crop dependency, increased agricultural productivity, aided diet and nutrition, and raised poor farmers' hopes. The 3-cent stamp was issued January 5, 1948, and the 32-cent stamp was issued February 3, 1998.



### ROBERTO CLEMENTE



Proud of his African-American and Hispanic roots, Roberto Clemente relied on his upbringing to weather incidents of racial prejudice that occurred early in his baseball career. He said, "I don't believe in color, I believe in people. My mother and father taught me never to hate... someone because of their color." He was known for his zeal and passion for his sport, his inclusive attitude, and his devotion to serving the poor and underprivileged. He was not just a great baseball player but a great humanitarian too — he died tragically in an airplane crash while attempting to deliver supplies to

earthquake victims in Nicaragua on December 31, 1972. The 20-cent stamp was issued August 17, 1984, and the 33-cent stamp was issued July 6, 2000.



### NAT KING COLE



Starting his musical career as a jazz pianist, Nat King Cole became one of the most popular vocalists of all time. He attained lasting acceptance from audiences around the world from his many recordings and his popular national television show, the first one hosted by an African-American artist. This stamp was issued September 1, 1994.





## MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was the most powerful and popular leader of the African-American protest movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He spearheaded mass action through marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and nonviolent demonstrations that profoundly and positively affected America's attitudes toward racial prejudice and discrimination. In 1963, he became the first African

American honored as *TIME* magazine's Man of the Year, and he was presented the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. The 15-cent stamp was issued January 13, 1979, and the 33-cent stamp was issued September 17, 1999.



## KWANZAA

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday symbolizing the need for a harmonious and principled togetherness in the family, the neighborhood, the nation, and the world. The seven guiding principles that Kwanzaa celebrates are unity, self-determination, collective work

and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. This stamp was first issued October 22, 1997, as part of the Holiday Celebration series, and it was reissued as a 33-cent stamp October 29, 1999, as a 34-cent stamp October 21, 2001, and as two 37-cent stamps. The first was issued on October 10, 2002, and the second will be issued in 2004.



## LEADBELLY

Born Huddie William Ledbetter, "Leadbelly" was a folk and blues artist who was known as the "king of the 12-string guitar." He was also a powerful singer of field and prison hollers and, as a participant in the trade union movement in the 1930s, of political protest songs. He never had much commercial success during his lifetime, but after his death

in 1949, several of his songs—including "The Midnight Special," "Cotton Fields," "Rock Island Line," and his trademark song, "Goodnight Irene"—became popular hits when sung by other artists. This stamp was issued June 26, 1998.



## JOE LOUIS

Known as the "Brown Bomber," Joseph Louis Barrow won the world heavyweight boxing title in 1937 and held it until he retired in 1949. He defended his title more than 20 times before he joined the Army in World War II, and defended it several more times after the war. Two of his most famous fights were against Max Schmeling—Louis lost in 1936 (his only loss as a professional before he retired), but he knocked out Schmeling in the first round in the rematch in 1938. This stamp was issued June 22, 1993.

## MALCOLM X

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, the son of a Baptist preacher. In 1931, Malcolm's father was killed, probably murdered because of his political and social activism. For Malcolm, this started a spiral into a life of crime that ended with his being sentenced to prison for burglary. While in prison, Malcolm became a militant activist and a follower of the Nation of Islam, a black nationalist religious movement based on traditional Islamic teachings and Marcus Garvey's principles of black nationalism. After his release from prison, Malcolm became a powerful spokesman for the movement, one who was both popular yet polarizing. But in 1964 he split from the movement and started the Organization of Afro-American Unity, and after a trip to Mecca, he took the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and came to believe that the world's people could live in fellowship. This stamp was issued January 20, 1999.



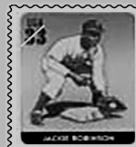
## ROBERTA MARTIN

Many African-American gospel singers have contributed to American music. Roberta Martin was the founder of the Roberta Martin Singers and operator of her own gospel music publishing house. This stamp was issued July 15, 1998.



## JACKIE ROBINSON

Jackie Robinson broke the Major League Baseball color barrier in 1947, had a 10-year all-star career, became the first African American inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, and had his number 42 retired by Major League Baseball in 1997. More important than his accomplishments in baseball are his contributions to racial equality in the United States, of which his many baseball "firsts" are just one part. After his retirement from baseball in 1956, he became very active in the civil rights movement, working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and on several political campaigns to help break barriers for all people, not just athletes. The 20-cent stamp was issued August 2, 1982, the 33-cent stamp of Robinson sliding was issued February 18, 1999, and the 33-cent stamp of him fielding was issued July 6, 2000.



## WILMA RUDOLPH

Few people would have expected that a child who suffered from polio and wore leg braces for several years would one day be proclaimed "the world's fastest woman," but that's the story of Wilma Rudolph, who at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, Italy, won three gold medals in sprint events (the 100-meter, 200-meter, and 4-x-100-meter relay events). Rudolph, who also won a bronze medal in the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia, won several awards and was inducted into the Black

Sports Hall of Fame in 1980. After retiring from competition, Rudolph worked as a teacher, track coach, and sports broadcaster. She also served in several government programs helping underprivileged youth. She also founded the Wilma Rudolph Foundation to promote community-based, youth-oriented athletic and academic programs. In her honor, the Women's Sports Foundation annually presents the Wilma Rudolph Courage Award to a female athlete who exhibits fortitude, perseverance, self-sacrifice, and inspiration. This stamp will be issued in 2004.

## 13TH AMENDMENT

The 75th anniversary of the passage of the 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery, was commemorated on a stamp issued in 1940. This stamp was issued October 20, 1940.



## SOJOURNER TRUTH

Sojourner Truth was one of the most inspirational and widely known African Americans of the 19th century. She was born Isabella Baumfree (also spelled "Baumfree") in 1797, a slave in New York, but received her freedom in 1828. In the 1830s, she became involved in evangelical movements, and in 1843 she changed her name to Sojourner Truth and began traveling and preaching. Her autobiography, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Bondswoman of Olden*, was published in 1875, and her speeches against slavery and for women's suffrage drew large

crowds. In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln received her at the White House, and from 1864 to 1868 she worked with the National Freedmen's Relief Association to advise former slaves as they started new lives. This stamp was issued February 4, 1986.



## HARRIET TUBMAN

Born a slave, abolitionist Harriet Tubman was the first African-American woman to be honored on a U.S. postage stamp. She was a conductor for the famed Underground Railroad, which helped many slaves escape to freedom before and during the Civil War. The 13-cent stamp was issued February 1, 1978, and the 32-cent stamp was issued June 29, 1995.



## You Have the Right to File an OWCP Claim When Diagnosed with COVID-19

*Currently, there is a spike of COVID-19 diagnosis throughout the United States. Postal Employees are not exempt from contracting COVID-19. Following national trends, there is also a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases at the Postal Service. Not knowing how COVID-19 can affect any one person whether it is a mild illness, a severe case, a case of “long” COVID-19, what the long-term effects might be, or sadly even death, it is vital that those who contract the virus understand that it is their right to apply for worker’s compensation benefits to protect themselves and their families.*

*If you are a postal employee, no matter if you are a career employee or non-career employee, you are entitled to file a claim with the Office of Workers Compensation Programs. The one caveat is that you must have worked at the Post Office at some point during the 21-days prior to your COVID-19 diagnosis. Employees that have claims approved are entitled to have their medical costs and lost wages paid.*

*Approved Claimants are also entitled to request that any annual sick or annual leave used be “bought back” and redeposited to their leave balances. Also, should a postal employee pass away due to COVID-19, their survivors are entitled to benefits under the compensation programs if there is an approved claim.*

*As previously reported, under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 signed into law on March 11, 2021:*

*Section 4016 of the law provides that a federal employee who is diagnosed with COVID-19 and carried out duties that required contact with patients, members of the public, or co-workers, or included a risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus during a covered period of exposure prior to the diagnosis, is deemed to have an injury that is proximately caused by employment.*

*In simple terms, this means that if you are diagnosed with (have a positive test) and you file an OWCP claim, it will be more than likely approved. You are not required to prove you contracted the disease at work. In order to receive benefits, those diagnosed must submit a claim. Do not expect management to do this for you and do not expect them to inform you that you have the right to file a claim.*

*When you file a claim for COVID-19 you are entitled to request continuation of pay (COP). This is pay at your regular rate of pay paid to you by the postal service during your COVID-19 illness absence. You are entitled to COP if you file your claim within 30-days of your diagnosis. If you are filing more than 30-days after your diagnosis, you are not entitled to COP. Please note, that for the first three days, the law requires a “waiting period” that you must use sick, annual, or leave without pay (LWOP) before COP kicks in. However, if your absence lasts longer than 14-days, the first three days will be converted to COP. Any non-scheduled days also count towards the three day “waiting” period. COP can be paid for up to 45 calendar days after which any additional missed time will be paid as worker’s compensation payments by OWCP.*

*whether you have an injury or not. In fact, it is a good idea to register and establish an account in case you need to use it anytime during your career for any at-work injury. It is also one thing less to worry about if you are diagnosed with COVID-19.*

*The instructions below are not all inclusive and do not guarantee claim approval..*

*To file a claim and to receive COP:*

- Notify your supervisor that you are sick with COVID-19
- Submit a PS-Form 3971 and check COP as the reason
- Register on e-COMP if you have not done so: <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov>
- Once registered on e-COMP, login to your account
  - Click on new claim on top right of page
  - On next screen, make sure “Federal Employee” is selected
  - Make sure to select Postal Service as the agency
  - Click “File Claim”
  - Click “next”
  - Select the COVID-19 Claim and enter information requested in the online form
  - Once requested information is entered, upload a copy of the positive laboratory COVID-19 results or other relevant medical documentation
  - After uploading, make sure you select “continuation of pay”
  - It is recommended you save a copy of your claim or at least write down the ECN number for your claim

*Here are some links to references for OWCP claims due to COVID-19: Video Tutorial*

*[on Registering for e-COMP](#)*

*[Video Tutorial on Filing COVID-19 Claim through e-COMP](#)*

*Register for e-COMP: <https://www.ecomp.dol.gov>*

*Now [It Is Easier to File FECA COVID Claims](#) | [American Postal Workers Union \(apwu.org\)](#)*

*[Claims under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) | U.S. Department of Labor ([dol.gov](https://www.dol.gov))*

*FECA Bulletins (2020-2024) | U.S. Department of Labor ([dol.gov](https://www.dol.gov)) this is the instructions claims examiners must follow*

***You have the right under the law to file an OWCP claim for COVID-19! Do not let management discourage you from filing a claim. Do not let them tell you that you have to prove your sickness was contracted at work as this is not a requirement of the law. It is in your best interest to file for the benefits. You protect yourself and your families by doing so. If you follow the steps and have a laboratory test confirmed case of COVID-19, you will likely be approved. However, the APWU cannot guarantee claim approval.***

Western Michigan Area Local #281  
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

James A. Sweeney Scholarship Fund  
Rules

1. There will be five (5) scholarships of \$1,000 each, given out annually.
2. The applicant's sponsor(s) (parent or legal guardian) must have been a member of the bargaining unit, in good standing, of the Western Michigan Area Local #281 of the American Postal Workers Union for a minimum of one (1) year, immediately preceding application deadline; provided the sponsor is not a postal manager. Children of retired members of the bargaining unit are eligible to apply, provided the retiree had been a member of the local for at least one year, immediately prior to his/her retirement.
3. To ensure an equal opportunity to obtain a scholarship, the applicant's name can only be submitted once per annum.
4. Applicant(s) must be a senior attending, or has graduated from high school or other corresponding secondary school.
5. The application form(s) for the scholarship shall appear in the Western Michigan Area Local's newsletter/publication representing the month of February. The submission deadline will be March 15 or the first Monday thereafter. Applications will be accepted through the mail only and should be addressed as follows:

WMAL  
Attn: James A. Sweeney Scholarship  
PO Box 2706  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501

6. The Scholarship Committee shall consist of up to five (5) members. Two (2) of these members shall be the currently elected Recording Secretary and Treasurer. One (1) member shall be the currently elected President, and he/she shall be designated as the Chairperson of the committee. The two (2) remaining members shall be appointed by the President.
7. The committee shall convene before the regular April meeting to verify the parent(s)/legal guardian's membership qualifications; but not sooner than March 25<sup>th</sup>.
8. The committee, upon verification of each application, shall number each application and place the number in a container designated by the committee. There shall be five (5) winners and a sufficient number of alternates drawn. The drawing will be held at the April General membership meeting during new business.



1. Scholarship recipients must attend an accredited college; including community colleges and/or universities of his/her choice as a full-time student (Trade and vocational schools do not qualify for scholarship). Applicants must make their own applications to college.
2. When the recipient notifies the Western Michigan Area Local's Treasurer that he/she has been accepted to the school, provided the winner notifies the union at least one month prior to the start of the academic year (to ensure that if an alternate needs to be chosen, it can be done so in a timely manner), the local treasurer will send to the school's business office a check, paid directly to the school attended by the winner, in the recipient's name. The scholarship will be sent to the respective school using the quarterly system in three (3) parts, or with schools using semesters, in two (2) parts. The scholarship must be used within the following scholastic year for tuition, books, or room and board.
3. All disputes arising from the scholarship program shall be submitted to the President, within thirty (30) days of the drawing, in written form. They shall be placed before the Scholarship Committee for review and shall be answered in writing within fifteen (15) days.
4. These rules governing the Western Michigan Area Local Scholarship Program can only be amended, changed, or deleted once a year at the November membership meeting and will take effect for the next scholastic year.

*The above rules have been properly voted upon by the General Membership at the November 2009 General Membership Meeting.*

#### VETERAN'S CRISIS LINE

If a veteran or service member you know is showing signs of crisis, such as hopelessness, anxiety, or withdrawal, call on the caring professionals at the VA's Veterans Crisis Line who are ready to listen and provide support.

The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource. Veterans, service members, and their families can access the line anytime.

There are three ways to take advantage of this benefit:

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and choose option one
- Go to [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)
- Text 838255

Each option has free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

You can start a conversation today! Visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) to download free Veterans Crisis Line materials so you can tell others how to do it, too.

Western Michigan Area Local  
American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

**James A. Sweeney Memorial Scholarship Application**

The application must be postmarked no later than March 21, 2022

***Mail to: WMAL; Attn: James A. Sweeney Scholarship; PO Box 2706; Grand Rapids, MI 49501***

**Applicant's Information**

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you filed a financial aid statement with the financial aid office applying for financial aid? Yes No

Scholarship Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's High School: \_\_\_\_\_

**APWU Member (Sponsor's) Information**

\*\*\*\*\*

Have you been a member of the Western Michigan Area Local for over one year? Yes No

Parent or Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Craft: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Location / Office Pay Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**WMAL Office Information (To be completed by the Scholarship Committee)**

\*\*\*\*\*

Date of Postmark on Application: \_\_\_\_\_ Verified by: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Verification of One Year prior to submission? Yes No Verified by: \_\_\_\_\_

Drawing Number Application is Assigned: \_\_\_\_\_

Happy Retirement!!!!  
MARK WILSON (MVS)  
(Congratulations & enjoy your next  
chapter in life!)

condolences to:



Welcome To Our New Members!!

NICOLE THOMPSON  
PRECIOUS RICHARDSON  
ERIKA SIMMONS  
JOSHUA MARCHIDO  
MELISSA KLEIN  
STEPHANIE SUMMERS  
MARY CHACON  
LIEZEL JEWELL  
AARON RICHARDSON  
ANTHONY ROSZELL  
ASHLIE LANGLEY  
REBECCA HARRISON  
KRISTI JOHNSON  
TANEISHA PEARSON  
RICKEY BELTON

Stay Healthy & Happy All!



*Looking for a location to hold an event? Check  
out our Union Hall! Great rates for members!*

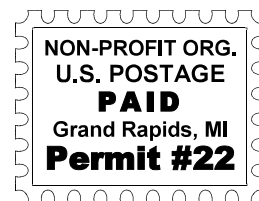
**Union Hall Rentals**  
**2554 Burlingame Ave SW, Wyoming**  
**MI 49509**  
**616-822-3520 | Capacity 188**

	<u>Hall Rental</u>	<u>Security Deposit</u>	<u>Security Agent Fee</u>
Members:	\$250.00	\$200.00	\$0
Non-Profit (meetings only)	\$125.00	\$0	\$0
Public	\$650.00	\$300.00	\$100.00

Western Michigan Area Local  
American Postal Workers Union  
PO Box 2706  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2706



*Address Service Requested*



*Looking for answers? Make sure to check out:*

**Next Union Meeting:**  
**Saturday, March 5 @ 7pm**

*[www.wmal.org](http://www.wmal.org)  
\*meeting minutes  
\*steward contact information  
\*job bids and awards  
\*upcoming events  
and so much more!*

## March 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		