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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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GRAND RAPIDS MAIN OFFICE 776-1489
 Fax: 776-1536

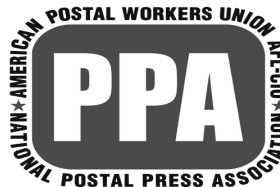
P-CAMPUS OFFICE 977-1050
 Fax: 977-1020

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT 888-767-6738
retirement line

HR SHARED SERVICES CENTER 877-477-3273
option 5

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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!

An Organized Union Is A Strong Union

By Michelle Mack, Vice President

The APWU is affiliated with the AFL-CIO, a federation of 66 national unions with a combined 13 million members. There are many reasons to be a member of our union and we must get the message to non-members that TODAY is the day to join our ranks as we strive to become stronger together. We are one of the few remaining long-standing unions with over 250,000 members and we need to continue that tradition into the future. Our current contract has given us some of the largest pay increases (including our cost-of-living adjustments) that we have ever seen. There has never been a better time to tell non-members what the APWU has done for all of us, including:

Wages - Regular pay increases, cost of living adjustments, Sunday premium pay, night differential pay, and penalty overtime pay.

Benefits - 95 % of premiums paid by USPS for the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan, basic life insurance fully paid by the USPS, eleven paid holidays, generous sick leave, and vacation benefits.

Job Security - Jobs awarded by seniority, training programs to upgrade skills and opportunities, and a negotiated no lay-off clause.

Representation - Outstanding representation in contract negotiations, effective grievance procedure, and an active legislation program to fight for postal workers on Capitol Hill.

Union Democracy - Direct elections of all union offices, membership ratification of contracts, opportunities to participate at all levels of the organization.

Members Only Privileges - Union Plus discounts (college scholarships, mortgage program, entertainment and theme park discounts, car buying services, etc.), APWU Health Plan, Voluntary Benefits Plan, Accident Benefit Association, APWU MasterCard (with no annual fee, low balance transfer rate, and competitive interest rate), and APWU magazine.

With a larger and more unified membership we can speak louder and have the power to thwart oncoming issues. **This is where I need the membership to volunteer.** I am looking for Union volunteers to join the Organizing Committee and brainstorm reaching our non-members with the goal of hosting an Organizing drive prior to an upcoming Union meeting. Working together, I believe we can make a difference. Please email me if you are interested at mrmack4573@gmail.com #UNIONSTRONGALLDAYLONG



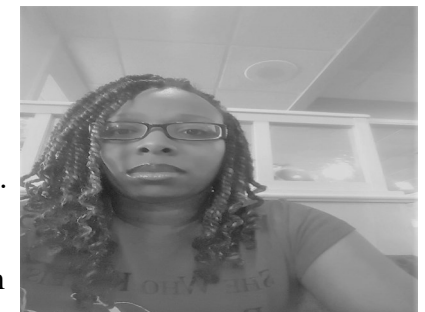
In Solidarity,

Michelle

WMAL

By AmeKa Jones, Clerk Craft Director B, ameka.stinson9960@gmail.com

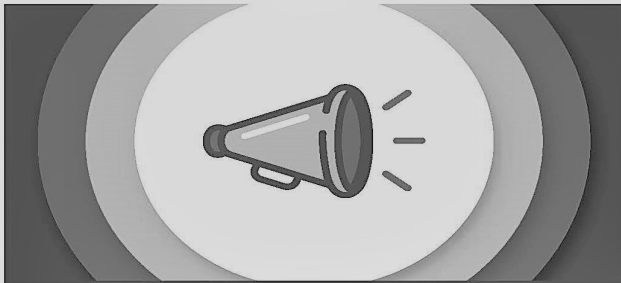
Hello, my name is AmeKa Jones. I am the new Clerk Craft Director B. I hope to do as well as my predecessor, David Janes. My focus is to stop management from doing bargaining unit work. When management does clerk work it takes away from hours of work from us! If you haven't already written a statement, please contact me about doing so. It would be a great help! You can email me at ameka.stinson9960@gmail.com We do not need management taking any more of our work



away from us. Stand together, brothers and sisters!

Thank you,

AmeKa Jones



Workers' Memorial Day **TAKE ACTION!**



On Friday April 28, 2023, postal workers will observe Workers' Memorial Day with a day of action.

It is a day when we remember workers killed or injured on the job and to renew the fight for strong safety and health protections. Fifty-three years after the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970

(OSHA) was passed, many of us are still exposed to unsafe working conditions. Understaffing often leads to hostile work environments, which are a major cause of workplace safety hazards.

Find out more about how you and your local can take action on Friday, April 28 at www.apwu.org/safe. It is up to us to make sure management is taking its responsibility for our safety at work seriously. ■

Creation of Staffing Task Force

Understaffing is a chronic and serious problem for both postal workers and postal customers.

The APWU made significant progress over the last few years in increasing Function 1 (Mail Processing) staffing. There is more work to do, but we have increased the size of the career workforce by over 10,000 jobs.

However, management commitments to address understaffing in Function 4 – (Retail and Distribution) have gone unfulfilled.

Understaffing increases stress on postal employees. It fuels the hostile work environment. It leads to a lot of forced overtime and the inability to obtain annual leave. In relation to VMF mechanics, it leads to increased subcontracting of our work. Short staffing of custodians translates to less safe facilities for every worker.

On the customer side, understaffing results in reduced service with long lines and slower service. Lack of staffing in carrier units delays mail getting to customers. In many cases, understaffing leads to the closing of retail units when not enough window clerks are available.

APWU President Mark Dimondstein recently created an APWU “Staffing Task Force,” a team at national APWU headquarters combined with local union activists from each of our five regions.

The goal of the task force is to assist APWU local and state organizations in winning needed staffing by building alliances with community organizations and the public. We'll take the fight “to the streets” through actions such as press events, petitions, workroom floor safety campaigns, and informational pickets.

Local and state leaders seeking assistance can contact the Staffing Task Force at: staffing@apwu.org. ■



Small Office Issues

By Dana Mclean, steward

Now that we are past the craziness of Christmas and mail volume is decreasing, we have to continue to fight for our hours in the small offices. Postmasters are always trying to cut hours without thinking or even caring about how it effects the clerks. Understaffing the window is a huge issue. Then they want us to apologize for the wait in line when most of the time there is a wait, it's because the window is understaffed. In level 18 offices and under where postmasters are allowed to work up to 15 hours of bargaining unit work, we need to document if we see them actually working more hours than they claim. For example, a postmaster who works 3 hours on the window a day, obviously cant sort packages in the morning. It's those hours that are hard to document without the clerks help. In the small offices where clerks have the cleaning hours, those hours are separate and are not to be done as the same time as working the window.

Every month besides the summer months, we have an union meeting at the union hall in Grand Rapids. It's a great time to meet more union members, meet the board members and other stewards. If you have issues in your office it's a great way to get your questions answered. Not to mention there are drawings , if your name is called and you are at the meeting you could win \$250. We need clerks in the AO's to be more active in the union, especially the younger clerks!

Some offices are already beginning to choose prime-time vacations. Check your LMOU to verify the dates for picking. Choosing goes by seniority. These are vacations that are guaranteed and cant be denied. Don't let postmasters deny you because they are off the same week you ask for. Their vacations have nothing to do with yours. If you do get denied , contact your steward.

I hope everyone has a wonderful spring and hopefully we get some warm weather soon!!

In Solidarity,
Dana Mclean



PREDIABETES – YOUR CHANCE TO PREVENT TYPE 2 DIABETES

WHAT IS PREDIABETES?

Prediabetes is a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Approximately 96 million American adults—more than 1 in 3—have prediabetes. Of those with prediabetes, more than 80% don't know they have it. Prediabetes puts you at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

The good news is that if you have prediabetes, you can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

You can have prediabetes for years but have no clear symptoms, so it often goes undetected until serious health problems such as type 2 diabetes show up. It's important to talk to your doctor about getting your blood sugar tested if you have any of the risk factors for prediabetes, which include:

- Being overweight
- Being 45 years or older
- Having a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes
- Being physically active less than 3 times a week
- Ever having gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or giving birth to a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds
- Having polycystic ovary syndrome

Race and ethnicity are also a factor: African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and some Asian Americans are at higher risk.

PREVENTING TYPE 2 DIABETES

If you have prediabetes, losing a small amount of weight if you're

overweight and getting regular physical activity can lower your risk for developing type 2 diabetes. A small amount of weight loss means around 5% to 7% of your body weight, just 10 to 14 pounds for a 200-pound person. Regular physical activity means getting at least 150 minutes a week of brisk walking or a similar activity. That's just 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

Learn more at: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prediabetes.html>

HOW CAN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN HELP?

As part of the preventive benefits for both the High Option and Consumer Driven Option, adult members can screen for diabetes at no extra cost! If you have any of the risk factors for prediabetes make sure you talk to your doctor to get your blood sugar tested.



APWU
HEALTH PLAN

TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.

www.apwuhp.com
(800) 222-2798

BENEFITS OF QUITTING SMOKING

No matter how much you smoke – or for how long – quitting will benefit you.

Quitting smoking can lower your risk of:

- Various cancers, including lung cancer
- Heart disease, stroke, emphysema, vision loss, and other serious diseases
- Disease and cancer in family members including children, and pets, who otherwise would be exposed to your secondhand smoke

HOW TO CHOOSE A SMOKING CESSATION PRODUCT THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Smoking cessation products approved or cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are shown to help people quit smoking and can even double your chance of quitting successfully.

Nicotine replacement therapy, also known as NRT, helps you quit smoking by gradually providing the body with smaller doses of nicotine over time, without exposing you to the toxic chemicals found in cigarette smoke.

Over-the-counter NRTs are approved for sale to people age 18 and older. They include:

- **Skin patches** (also called “transdermal nicotine patches”). These patches are placed on the skin, similar to how you would apply an adhesive bandage.
- **Chewing gum** (also called “nicotine gum”). This gum must be chewed according to the labeled instructions to be effective.
- **Lozenges** (also called “nicotine lozenges”). You use these products by dissolving them in your mouth.

Prescription Smoking Cessation Products That Contain Nicotine:

- Nicotine spray
- Nicotine inhaler

FDA-Approved Prescription Smoking Cessation Products That Do Not Contain Nicotine:

- Varenicline tartrate
- Bupropion hydrochloride

HOW CAN THE APWU HEALTH PLAN HELP?

Both High Option and Consumer Driven Option members can enroll in the Tobacco Cessation Program at no extra cost!

- **High Option Members:** call Cigna/CareAllies at 1-800-582-1314 to enroll.
- **Consumer Driven Option Members:** call UnitedHealthcare at 1-800-718-1299 to enroll.

APWU Health Plan also covers Lung Cancer Screenings at no additional cost for adults ages 50-80 who have a 20 pack-year smoking history. So if you're concerned that you might have lung cancer call your primary care provider today to schedule a lung cancer screening!

Also, most FDA-approved medications are paid at 100% so don't hesitate to take advantage of this benefit!



TOGETHER.
BETTER HEALTH.

www.apwuhp.com
(800) 222-2798

APWU Legislative & Political Department Current Legislative Priorities in the 118th Congress

With the 118th Congress in full swing, it is important that we update you on some of our legislative priorities this session. While this list is not exhaustive, it highlights what we are currently fighting for on Capitol Hill to improve the lives of the working class.

The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82, S.597)

Senior citizens collecting Social Security have faced unfair reductions in their monthly benefits due to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). These two provisions of a 1983 law penalize Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees and their spouses who found secondary employment outside of the federal system. The fact is that these retirees have paid their fair share into Social Security and meet the necessary requirements, but are not receiving the benefits they have earned.

The Social Security Expansion Act (H.R. 1046, S. 393)

Aside from simply fixing current Social Security law, APWU is fighting for the expansion of senior Social Security benefits. This bill, if passed and signed into law, would increase benefits by \$200 a month, raise COLAs, and bring back student benefits for dependent children. Notably, this legislation would lift the cap on Social Security taxes so that the rich will begin to pay their fair share into the program.

The Equal COLA Act (H.R. 866)

Currently, there is a disparity between Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) for those who retired under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and those who retired under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The difference can be up to one percentage point, which can equal tens of thousands of dollars over the course of a retirement and is felt more deeply during times of high inflation.

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act (H.R. 20, S.567)

With union membership declining and the rich getting richer off of the backs of hard working Americans, now is the time to protect the right to organize. Provisions of this bill would make it easier to join unions and allow workers to get rid of anti-union “right-to-work” laws. Additionally, the PRO Act would increase worker protections, namely from being replaced during strikes and through both monetary fines and personal liability for employers that violate workers’ rights. The last component of the bill helps to promote fair union elections, without the interference of management.

The Vote at Home Act (H.R. 1439, S.700)

APWU hopes to expand access to vote-by-mail to all Americans. This bill would require that every registered voter in the nation receive their ballot via USPS with prepaid postage. Implementation of this policy would allow access to the ballot box for all and result in less voter suppression through obstacles such as absentee ballot excuse requirements or polling location inaccessibility. Both the 2020 and 2022 elections have proven the efficacy of vote-by-mail, and it is time that everyone can reap the benefits of this program.

For more information on our legislative priorities, please visit the Legislative and Political Department page at apwu.org. As more bills get reintroduced this Congress, our web page will be continually updated. The web page also has information on how you can find your federal, state, and local representatives, as well as tips on how to lobby. We thank you in advance for all of your lobbying efforts.

2023 Legislative Conference: Building Grassroots Power

If you are interested in learning more about what we do here in the Legislative and Political Department, please join us for our legislative conference on Sunday, October 1, 2023 in Las Vegas, NV. We hope to increase your legislative knowledge and teach you some grassroots strategies to hold our elected officials accountable. More details are located on the events page of the APWU web page under the title “2023 Legislative & Political Conference.”

Courtesy of the APWU Legislative & Political Department

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.

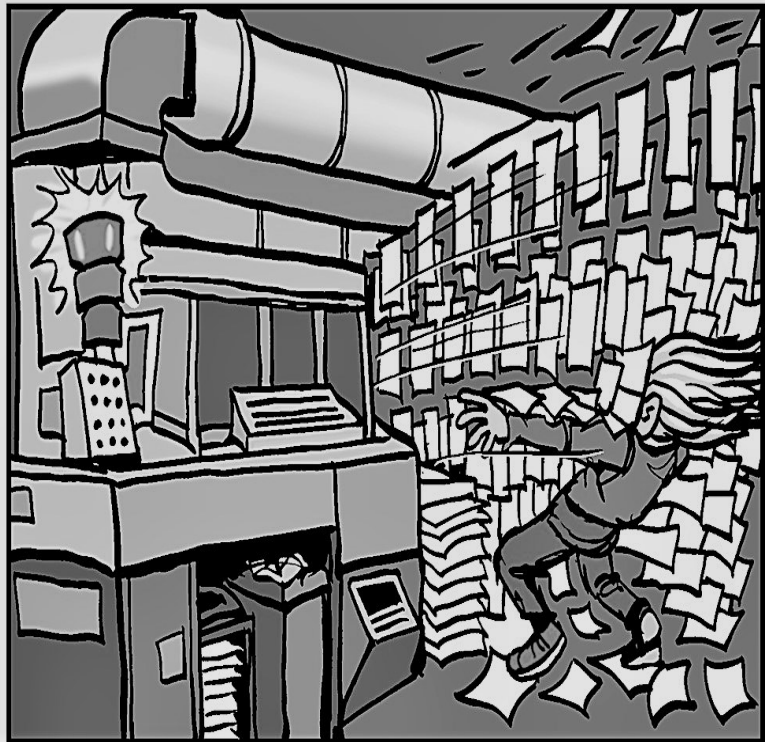
There are three ways to take advantage of this benefit:

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and choose option one
- Go to VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat
- 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 to download free Veterans Crisis Line materials so you can tell others how to do it, too.

Postal locations are understaffed but we are still getting the job done!



Courtesy of the American Postal Worker

Happy Retirement!!!!

Art Menzel
Shane Reynolds
Bruce Barnard

(Congratulations & enjoy your next chapter in life!)

Welcome To Our New Members!!

Rick Cotton
Nakia Simpson
Steven Leech
Jeffrey McAuliffe
Brenda Brown
Samaria Kilgo
Dominique Bothwell
George Woods
Starneta Scott

condolences to:



Deepest Sympathies to member David Jilote on the passing of his grandmother.

Congratulations to the James Sweeney Scholarship Winners!

1. *Levi Mack (Michelle Mack)*
2. *Bryanna Stine (Theresa Stewart)*
3. *Cora Siuda (Ann Siuda)*
4. *Andraya Johnson (Kristine Johnson)*
5. *Mathew Reynolds (Shane Reynolds)*

Alternates:

1. *Nolan Marx (Michael Marx)*
2. *Janae Chacon (Mary Chacon)*
3. *Lauryn Jackson (Ricky Jackson)*
4. *Aylee Hodges (Todd Hodges)*
5. *Jazmine Gutierrez (Nicole Lynch)*

Cover photo via Pexels.com (Polina Kovaleva)

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:

www.wmal.org

**meeting minutes*

**steward contact information*

**job bids and awards*

**upcoming events*

**Next Union Meeting:
Sunday, May 7 @ 2 pm**

May 2023

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			