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# WMAL VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
WESTERN MICHIGAN AREA LOCAL #281  
AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO



## APWU HAS A NEW CONTRACT



**MICHIGAN**



**MICHIGAN**



## WMAL Voice

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HR SHARED SERVICES CENTER—Shared Services Line	877-477-3273
PostalEase	option 1
Job Bidding Line	option 2
Sick/Unscheduled Leave Request	option 4
Human Resources	option 5
HARD OF HEARING - FEDERAL RELAY SERVICE	800-877-8339

### REPRESENTING APWU BARGAINING EMPLOYEES IN:

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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 editor@wmal.org of anything you would like included. Pictures are welcomed!



# The Long And Short Of It

By Michael Long, President

Firstly, I want to apologize to the membership for the lateness of this edition. Unfortunately, we have not been having people write many articles as of late, and I am not just going to spend thousands of dollars of your dues money to send out my article and a few pictures. In between the editions for the newsletter though, I do update our local's Facebook page and the website to keep you abreast of what is happening. If you are not on those mediums, I suggest you add. I have been toying with also having a Discord, X, BlueSky, and such presence; however, I can't do that alone. If you would like to step up and assist in this endeavor, please contact me.

That leads me into something; what can we do as a local to provide you with more information and give you the tools you need to not only do your job as an employee of the USPS, but to maybe motivate you in the labor movement, or at a minimum assist you in your daily lives? Please share your thoughts and insights on this. As always, you can email me, or call (my information is included in this newsletter and is also available on the website – wmal.org).

So, where to start...

**New Contract.** I guess I would be remiss if this wasn't first. As the cover stated on this edition of the newsletter, we have a new contract which covers the period of September 21, 2024 through September 20, 2027. Of those who voted for the new contract, 95% of those people voted in favor of it. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of members actually voted. I have placed a highlight page in this edition; however, as those who know me, and especially when I do orientations, I say: "if you aren't here for the money, then you are here for the wrong reason." We work to be paid, if we didn't need the money, then why would we be working. With that said, National released the Stop Gap date of August 23, 2025 for the new pay rates to start, which will be paid on our September 12, 2025 paycheck. This date will include our first contractual raise of 1.3 (from November 2024), along with the first COLA from January 2025. On average, the increase is around 60 cents per hour. On September 6, 2025, and payment on the September 26 payday, will be the July 2025 COLA raise; which equates to approximately 39 cents per hour. However, with this being said, the first question out of most people is: "When will we get our backpay?"

And those of us who have been here for any length of time knows, the Postal Service does not have the most up-to-date computers and technology. If you are at the P-Campus, go look at the computer that runs the LMS (the belts that feed the APBS), and you will notice that this computer is still running Windows 95. But I digress...with previous contracts, once the Stopgap Day is implemented, calculations can begin on

our backpay. While normally, it can take 3-4 months for this to happen, backpay could hit anytime; however, the projected time the Postal Service has stated to the APWU is in our paychecks on April 10, 2026. (This is the estimated time, and the APWU still believes that our retroactive pay can be completed sooner; however, as Director Cash states: "... we cannot make any promises or guarantee that the retroactive payment date will be changed.")

The retroactive pay period will be from the date of the first general wage increase of November 16, 2024, through August 22, 2025. Any employee who has separated (retired, resigned, discharged, etc.) from the Postal Service and had work or paid leave hours during the retro period will also receive a retroactive check. It will be sent to their last office on record. Retired employees will also have their records with OPM updated by the Postal Service. Annuities will eventually be adjusted. Once the records are sent to OPM, it is up to OPM to adjust the annuity.

Also, with the new contract, some dates that are coming up within a couple of months that will affect some of our members: Elimination of Step JJ for Grade 4 Pay Period 24-2025 (begins November 1, 2025); Elimination Step GG for PSEs converted to Career under the 24-Month MOU Pay Period 24-2024 (begins November 1, 2025); PSE new "steps" Pay Period 1-2026 (begins December 13, 2025), and lastly, Night Shift Differential Increase of 4.0% Pay Period 21-2025 (begins September 20, 2025)

**Office Cleaning.** While we didn't get everything we wanted in the new contract, we kept what we had and gained some. National states that we didn't give anything back; however, when you look at the contract, there is one thing missing... especially for those in maintenance, and even the clerks in the Associate Offices, the TL-5 moratorium expired and was not renewed.

What does that mean? Those offices that have remained under the TL-3, can now be moved under TL-5 and the cuts can commence. Even if it isn't big cuts, TL-5 cuts hours to clean. And now with the new Eagle Clean scanners (they automated how custodians input their routes) being rolled out to Function 4 (and even some Function 1 sites (as of right now, I was told that the Grand Rapids plant will not have Eagle Clean; however, the stations and branches already do)), we will wait to see what kind of impact will occur. I was also informed that management plans to roll out the TL-5 frequency to even small offices (where clerks clean).

(Continued on page 12)



## Let's Debate The Issue - Isn't It True

By *Brittany Thompson* -  
Steward @ Hesperia & MPWU Area 9 Director



Dear WMAL Family,

I can not fully express my gratitude to you for sending me to the Arbitration Advocacy training program. The support in enhancing my professional skills through this training is greatly appreciated. I do believe that anyone who has an opportunity to attend this training not only will gain a better understanding of Arbitration but will become a stronger steward by the time they have finished this course.

The Arbitration Advocacy training was informative, inspiring and a fantastic way to gain more connections through other Union members. I benefitted from the course because I know I struggle with public speaking and during arbitration you must do exactly that. Being prepared for anything that can be thrown at you. The training provided me with knowledge and practical skills that will benefit my role as a union member. Learning about the proper way to do direct examination was particularly appreciated. The opportunity to practice these skills and receive expert coaching was helpful. I feel more confident in my ability to effectively represent members in arbitration as well as through my choice to be a steward.

This course broadened my perspective and has provided me with practical skills to implement into my work. I appreciate the Union for the investment in my professional growth. With this training I feel I have greater appreciation for those who have come before me to the roles of arbitration advocates. While I am grateful for this opportunity to increase my ability to represent the union and all the clerks I represent. I am thankful that I was also able to meet more than a handful of stewards who are very well versed and willing to help as well. I met people from everywhere, including Puerto Rico.

I would also like to extend the biggest THANK YOU to my instructors, Joyce Robinson, Mike Morris, James Stevenson, Rachel Walthall and Jim DeMauro. Jim was one of the most encouraging people, while everyone else was too, I found that I was asking lots of questions and getting great information from Jim. The group work he did with us was without a doubt some of the best. Seeing him get excited during our practice Arbitration was even better. He and I even laughed at something I happened to do myself during our practice arbitration. While I know that I wasn't perfect the first time around, the constructive criticism was great. The words of encouragement were even better. To learn from some of these great minds, great instructors was more than I ever imagined it would be. The ability to grow my connections will just continue to help me regularly. I would also be remiss if I didn't publicly thank Eric Chorony from the 480-481 Area Local. His assistance during this week was invaluable. Sometimes I think I wouldn't have been able to make it through without his guidance and support as well. Thank you NBA Linda Turney for putting my name in to allow me to attend this training.



Again, words cannot express my thanks for this valuable experience and dedication to fostering learning and development to be used to help fight management and help us win more cases that go in front of an arbitrator.

Brittany



Elections for the Western Michigan Area Local #281 will occur with appointment of the Election committee at the September 2025 General Membership Meeting (GMM), Nominations at the October 2025 GMM, Verification at the November GMM, Ballots to homes during November, and counting of ballots prior to December GMM, with announcement of winners at December GMM. The following constitutional language is provided which covers this and duties of officers, etc.

## **ARTICLE 7** **OFFICERS**

Section 1: The officers of this organization shall be:

1. President
2. Executive Vice-President
3. Recording Secretary
4. Treasurer
5. Director for each craft as follows:
  - a. Clerk (A)
  - b. Maintenance
  - c. Motor Vehicle
  - d. Clerk (B)
6. Sergeant-at-Arms

Section 2: All officers shall be elected by secret ballot except in such cases provided for in Article 8.

Section 3: Officers shall rank as listed in Section 1 of this Article.

Section 4:

(a) Any member of the Western Michigan Area Local who voluntarily holds a EAS position shall be ineligible to hold or be nominated for any office, either elected or appointed, in the Western Michigan Area Local or to be a delegate to any convention held by the APWU or any subordinate body of the APWU, for a period of one (1) year from the date the member ceases from filling/holding such position(s).

Any member who has submitted an application for an EAS position shall withdraw such application prior to acceptance of nomination for any office (or delegate to a convention/ conference) in the Western Michigan Area Local. Failure to do so, and upon discovery of said violation of this language, the member will immediately vacate his/her position and and/or withdraw from being a delegate and, if applicable, renumerate the local for any monetary expenditures (e.g. (this list is not exhaustive) payroll, trips, (including all items including all items included within that trip motion), cellphone, dues reimbursement, etc.), This will also waive the payment of yearly reimbursement LWOP usage for retirement (Article 20 of the Constitution). This language also applies to any member who submits an application for or accepts an EAS position while he/she is EAS position while he/she is serving as an officer, steward, or delegate of the Western Michigan Area Local.

b) Any Postal employee who shall voluntarily, after August 31, 1984, holds, accepts or applies for any managerial or supervisory position, EAS position or PASS Program, for any period of time, whether one day or a fraction thereof, either detailed, acting, probationary or permanently, shall immediately vacate any office held (including stewards) by that member in the local or any subordinate body of the APWU which receives financial support or uses the name of the APWU, either appointed or elected.

Section 5:

- a) The President of this local shall receive a salary of \$6,000.00 per year, in addition to sixty (60) days LWOP, to be used for union business. In the event it becomes necessary to exceed the allowable sixty (60) days LWOP, the President shall submit in writing his/her request for additional LWOP, documenting same, to the Executive Board for approval. The President of this Local shall be compensated by the Local for any loss of annual or sick leave due to the use of LWOP.
- b) The Executive Vice-President of this Local shall receive a salary of \$2,500.00 per year, plus up to eighty (80) hours of LWOP per year, to be used for union business. In the event it becomes necessary to exceed the allowable 80 hours of LWOP, the Executive Vice-President shall submit in writing, his/her request for additional LWOP documenting same to the

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- Executive Board, for approval. The Executive Vice-President of this Local, shall be compensated by the Local for any loss of annual or sick leave due to the use of LWOP.
- c) The Recording Secretary of this Local shall receive a salary of \$1,500.00 per year plus up to forty (40) hours of LWOP per year, to be used for union business. In the event it becomes necessary to exceed the allowable 40 hours of LWOP, the Recording Secretary shall submit in writing, his/her request for additional LWOP documenting same to the Executive Board, for approval. The Recording Secretary of this Local, shall be compensated by the Local for any loss of annual or sick leave due to the use of LWOP.
  - d) The Treasurer of this Local shall receive a salary of \$3,000.00 per year, plus up to forty (40) hours of LWOP, to be used for union business. In the event it becomes necessary to exceed the allowable 40 hours of LWOP, the Treasurer shall submit in writing, his/her request for additional LWOP documenting same to the Executive Board for approval. The Treasurer of this Local shall be compensated by the Local for any loss of annual or sick leave, due to the use of LWOP.
  - e) The Craft Directors of this Local shall receive a salary of \$2,000 per year, plus 40 hours of LWOP, to be used for union business. The Craft Directors of the Local shall be compensated for any loss of annual leave or sick leave due to the use of LWOP for local union business.
  - f) The Sergeant-at-Arms of this Local shall receive a salary of \$1,000.00 per year.

Section 6: The salaries will be paid quarterly in the months of March, June, September and December.

## **ARTICLE 8**

### **VACANCY IN OFFICE**

Section 1: In the event of a vacancy in the office of the president of this local, for any reason whatsoever, the Executive Vice-President shall perform duties of the President until the Executive Board appoints a new President to serve the remaining term of office.

The vote to appoint a new President shall be made by the executive board no later than 60 days after the vacancy has occurred. Once the vote has occurred, and a nominee is selected, it shall go before the membership at the next general/special membership meeting for concurrence by the membership of the attendees of that meeting by a majority vote. The vote shall be on a secret paper ballot to accept or not accept the Executive Board selection. Those votes will be counted at that meeting after all the votes have been submitted. If the membership votes not to accept the selection of the executive board, the Executive Board vote shall be vetoed, and a new selection must be made no later than 60 days. The new nominee for President cannot be the previous person who was nominated by the board at the last general/special meeting. If the membership accepts the Executives Board's recommendation, that selection shall be made President.

Section 2: In the event of a vacancy in any office, the Executive Board shall appoint a member in good standing to fill such vacancy for the remainder of the term.

## **ARTICLE 9**

### **DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

Section 1: The President shall preside at all meetings of this Local. He/she shall appoint all committees not herein after provided for. He/she shall enforce the Constitution of this Local and those of the APWU, sign all warrants, have general supervisory power of this Local. He/she shall be President of the Accident Benefit Association, and have his/her dues paid in the ABA by the Local, and perform such duties as pertain to his/her office. He/she shall contribute a minimum of two articles per year to the local newsletter. At the expiration of his/her term of office he/she shall make a written report of his/her office and any progress of this Local.

Section 2: The Executive Vice-President shall in the absence of the President be vested with the same powers and authority as the President and, under the direction of the President, shall perform such duties as the office requires. He/she shall be the Director of Education and Research in which he/she will plan and conduct a comprehensive program of Labor Education for Local members and officers, coordinate local training activities with those of State and National offices, educational institutions and other labor organizations, gather and develop information resource on all matters of concern to Local members including all areas of Union affairs, Postal Service policies and programs, and developments outside the Postal Service which may have value to Local goals and activities. He/she shall also be responsive for establishing a program for organizational activities in this

*(Continued on page 7)*



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Local. He/she shall contribute a minimum of two articles per year to the local newsletter. At the end of his/her term shall turn over all books, papers and equipment that belong to the Local.

Section 3: The Recording Secretary, under the direction of the President, shall keep a correct record of the proceedings of all meetings of this Local. He/she shall provide a copy of the minutes of all regular meetings to the president within seven (7) days of such meetings and post said minutes on the Local's bulletin boards in the GMF and supply copies of said minutes to all offices that are under the jurisdiction of our local, within the same time frame. He/she shall keep on file all resolutions adopted by this local, and of the original draft of this constitution and shall insert such amendments as may be made the same. He/she shall read all resolutions, when presented at a meeting, and post said resolutions in accordance with Article 13 of this Constitution on the Local's bulletin boards in the GMF and supply copies of said resolutions to all offices that are under the jurisdiction of our Local. He/she shall perform other duties as pertain to his/her office, including the handling of all correspondence. He/she shall keep current files on all Local policy and meeting minutes both Executive Board and General, on a computer disk at the union office. At the end of his/her term of office shall turn over all books, papers and equipment to the Local.

Section 4: The Treasurer, under the direction of the President, shall collect all dues and assessments ordered by this Local. He/she shall receive all monies accruing to this Local by solicitation or other means, and shall deposit all monies in a bank approved by this Local. He/she shall notify all members whose dues are in arrears of their delinquency, and of their suspension, if such arrears are not paid or arrangements made for its payment in the periods stipulated in this Constitution. He/she shall pay by check, countersigned by the President or the person acting in the President's behalf, during the President's absence, all bills authorized by this Local. He/she shall be responsible for filing all necessary forms required by the Internal Revenue Service, Michigan Employment Security Commission and the Department of Labor. He/she shall keep a systematic book account of all monies received and paid out and shall submit the same to inspection upon request of three (3) members of this Local. In the event the Treasurer is out of the Western Michigan area or is incapacitated for a period of seventy-two (72) hours or more, the President may authorize the Executive Vice- President to prepare and sign checks, in place of the Treasurer in an emergency situation. At the close of his/her term of office, shall render a complete statement of the year's revenues and expenses and turn over to his/her successor all monies, books and papers pertaining to his/her office.

Section 5: Craft Directors, under the direction of the President, shall be responsible for all grievances and matters pertaining to their respective crafts. Policy decisions of Craft Directors must first be approved by the President; contribute as a minimum of two articles per year to the local newsletter, and present a report at the General Membership Meeting each month. At the close of his/her term of office he/she shall turn over all books, papers, and equipment that belong to the Local.

Section 6: The Sergeant-at Arms, under the direction of the President, shall see that no one but members are present at meetings unless otherwise directed by the President, preserve order at all meetings, keep a record of attendance at all meetings, and perform such other duties as directed by the President. At the close of his/her term of office he/she shall turn over all books, papers, and equipment that belong to the Local.

Section 7: The elected officers shall constitute the Executive Board, which between regular meetings shall have the authority to initiate measures as may be most effective in the interest and protection of the membership and have the power to act on all matters pertaining to the Local. A quorum for an Executive Board meeting shall be at least a majority of the Executive Board members.

Section 8: Any officer may be excused from no more than two meetings in any calendar year. Any officer that has missed more than two meetings during the year will only be paid their salary for months in which they attend the scheduled monthly meetings. Those officers working on behalf of the membership or on union business will be considered present for that month's meeting.

Section 9: Stewards shall be appointed and/or decertified with approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Executive Board.

## **ARTICLE 10**

### **NOMINATIONS OF OFFICERS**

Section 1: Nomination of the election of officers of this local will take place at the October meeting preceding elections that will be held by mail TEN DAYS following the November meeting in the election year, which is every third year. Nominations will be made in the following ways:

- a. Any member in good standing who is present at the October meeting of the election year may nominate any member in good standing, but such nominations must be seconded by another member in good standing.

*(Continued on page 8)*  
Page 7

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- b. Any ten (10) members in good standing may nominate any person in good standing in this Local by the presentation of a petition to the election committee at or subsequent to the meeting in which nominations are heard.
- c. Write-in votes are prohibited by this Local.
- d. If there is only one (1) candidate for any office, that person will be declared the winner after all persons shall have had the opportunity to accept or reject their nomination to office in writing. The Chair of the Election Committee will post all such declarations SEVEN (7) days following the October meeting.

Section 2: Nominees will be given SEVENTY-TWO (72) HOURS from the time that they receive written notice from the Election Committee of their nomination to Office, to either accept or decline the nomination to that office.

- a. Any nominee failing to reply after such notice, or unavailable to be notified within SEVEN (7) days of their nomination will be disqualified.
- b. An individual may remain a candidate for only one office. If nominated for more than one office, the individual has SEVENTY-TWO (72) HOURS to accept only one and reject all other nominations for other offices.
- c. At the end of the SEVEN (7) day period, the Election Committee will declare the ballot closed. The ballot will be formulated and sent to the printer for preparation of ballot proofs that will be presented for inspection by the candidates at the November meeting preceding the election for corrections or errors and misspellings. The Election Committee will make changes to correct any errors or misspellings.

Section 3: The Election Committee will be appointed by the Executive Board and will be announced at the September meeting.

- a. The Chair of the Election Committee will be selected by a vote of the Election Committee, after its approval by the membership.
- b. The Election Committee members will be paid in accordance with local policies on committee's pay to perform these duties. Once seated, it shall be sole judge of its schedule, meeting at the call of its chair.

Section 4: Duties of the Election Committee and WMAL Officers during the Nominations and Election Process.

- a. The President of this Local will instruct the Election Committee of their duties and responsibilities assuring that all materials and publications necessary for the Election Committee to conduct its business are provided to the Committee at the September General Meeting of the Local during the election year.
- b. The Treasurer will provide a list of all members in good standing, including all members whose applications for membership have been processed and received by the Local at the time of the September meeting will be considered eligible to vote in the November election unless prohibited under Statutory Law.
- c. The Election Committee will prepare and make ready for distribution Ballots for all contested offices after the November Meeting. Ballots will be mailed TEN (10) days following that meeting to every member in good standing with exception of those prohibited from participation by Statue.
- d. It shall be the duty of the Election Committee to mail to each member a ballot with the names of the candidates for the Local Office. The ballot will be accompanied by three (3) envelopes. The smaller envelope will be printed with the words "BALLOT ONLY", ONE (1) OF TWO (2) larger envelopes will have the words "BALLOT OF" on it and be properly addressed to the last known address of the member, including proper postage; the third envelope will include the proper return post Office Box of the Election Committee in the address area of the envelope and will include an unhampered proper last address of the member that will determine the validity of the ballot.
- e. The Election Committee will collect and count the ballots the day before the Date of the December meeting of the Election Year. Following the count, they will announce the results of the election; declaring the winners, and; make a complete report at the December Meeting.
- f. A plurality of votes for any office will determine who is elected to each office. In case of a tie vote, a secret ballot of members present at the December Meeting will determine who serves in that office.
- g. The Secretary will be present during the counting of ballots. After the committee finishes its duties concerning the counting of the ballots, the Secretary will accept, secure and retain the records of the election for ONE (1) YEAR after the election.

Section 5: Craft Directors shall be elected by members from within their craft.

Section 6: Newly elected officers will take office on January 1, following the election year and will serve for a period of three (3) years.



## ***Executive Update or Retiree Update - You Choose***

***By David Janes, Executive Vice President***

Greetings from retiree land! Although I did officially retire from the postal service, I stayed on as the Vice President for this local until the next election which will be in November. It was with great thought and reflection of what was going to be best for all involved that I came to this decision, and it wouldn't make a whole lot of sense to train someone for the VP position, then have them either not run, or someone else be elected. So I will stay on until that person is elected, and then pass on that knowledge to them. I can't tell you how privileged I feel that you all have trusted me enough to be your representative, and I hope that I served you well as I go to celebrate the remainder of my life with my family. So a big thank you to all the members for allowing me this honor!

I'd like to use this time to help all reading this of your rights under OWCP. Jennifer Rizzon and I went to Houston as the two representatives for this local to get further education for items that fall under Human Relations. I decided to write about the OWCP that I learned there, and no sooner than I returned from Houston, within one week a member was hurt by an APC and had her finger smashed. In my investigation in this, I found out by directly questioning different supervisors that none of them said that they had any training on what to do when an employee is hurt. This shocked me. Management has put absolutely no effort in to knowing what to do when you get hurt on the job. How can they be so callous that they don't put in any thought as to what they should do when an employee gets hurt under their direction?! I know that when Lisa Borchardt was Clerk Craft Director A, she wrote a good article about what your rights are when you are hurt on the job, but maybe it's time for a refresher.

Let's be real, we all work with some potentially dangerous equipment. Even though we do our best to make sure that all the mail is processed to the best of our ability every day, accidents happen. When you are injured on the job, you have the right to immediately go to the doctor of your choice for the initial visit. Management is required to fill out a CA-16 which gives you authorization to get treatment at the hospital of your choice. Depending on what type of injury you suffer, they will also have to fill out a CA-1 (for an immediate injury that can be defined by a single incident), or a CA-2 (for injuries that have occurred or worsened over time from things like repetitive motions). If you are injured from an immediate injury, and you receive a CA-1 and CA-16, under no circumstances are you required to request leave for the rest of that day if you worked less than 8 hours. The reason being, had you not been at work for that day, there would be no reason to go to the hospital. This is a workplace injury, and the time you go to the hospital is on the clock. You are not required to fill out a statement before going to the doctor either. Get treated first

to make sure that the injury doesn't get worse or infected. There's time after to get your statement. Make sure you maintain as much of your health as you can before doing all the paperwork. You came to work in one piece, you should leave with the same health you entered with. Don't expect management to know this. The ones I spoke with at the plant didn't even know which form to give the employee so they could seek treatment at the hospital. This is startling to me.



Keep a copy of all your documents too. When a workplace injury happens, the Department of Labor keeps a file on all paperwork involving your injuries that happened while you worked for your whole career. There is a website that you can set up for yourselves, so that way you can access all of your workplace injury claims at a single website, [ecomp.dol.gov](http://ecomp.dol.gov). I highly recommend that you go to that site, even if you aren't injured, and make an account. The reason being, if you are ever hurt on the job, this is the website that will handle your claim. If you already have an account made, you will be able to access your claim quicker, and make any fact in there more accurate in case management tries to dispute your claim. Management is hoping that you don't know about this to make it easier for them to deny your claim, and make you responsible for the costs of that workplace injury. Not all management is like this, but you and I both know, there is more than the lion's share of ones who will do this. This will help protect yourself against false claims that could be made by management, and gives you the resource to contact your case worker to make sure that you can dispute false claims made by management, and also correct mistakes you may have made as well.

Creating the account is free, and only costs you a few minutes of your time. If you have had any workplace injuries prior, they will also likely be recorded in this as well. A few years ago, President Biden had made it so that everything is to be electronically stored, so the Postal Service was required to make a file for every employee. Go in there and create an account just to see if anything made it in, and if you have something that could be considered a repetitive injury, this may help substantiate your case. There's no penalty for creating that case, and knowledge is helpful if you ever need to you make your claim.

As always, stay united, and continue the fight to create and keep jobs at the postal service. Protect each other, and realize that management wants to divide us to fight each other, so that they can do what they want to make their life easier. If you see them doing our work, report it. The bid you help save, may be your own.

*Dave*

# Human Relations / Injury Compensation

By Jennifer Rizzon

Thank you for sending me to the Human Relations Educational Conference.

This was one of the best conferences I have attended. The speakers were great and the training classes were very good. I brought home materials on OWCP, EEOC, Social justice & racial equality, EAP and Civil Freedoms and these are available for any member to have.



However, I want to focus on Veterans Rights & Benefits/Project 2025 with this article. The workshop was held by the APWU's National Veterans, Guard & Reservist Information Specialist (VGRIS) Robert "Bob" La Foe.

We had a good discussion to explain what Project 2025 has instore for our Veterans.

VA healthcare is directly connected to the Project 2025 plan. Project 2025 calls for a 50% reduction in federal employees within a year, and 75% reduction within 4 years. Veterans make up about 30% of the federal government workforce, including more than 30,000 APWU Postal Service Veterans, many of whom are disable. Cutting federal jobs would seriously affect veterans who rely of these positions for employment.

Specific ways that Project 2025 harms our veterans is that Project 2025 proposes cutting benefits for disable veterans, making it harder for them to obtain disability benefits by reducing the number of medical conditions that veterans can claim to qualify for disability status.

Project 2025 also aims to automate all claims which would make it easier to increase denial rates, while cutting health care coverage for veterans and reducing the quality of care.

Project 2025 seeks to cut homeless veteran's programs and abolish the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) which plays an important role in protecting Veterans from financial fraud & scams. It also wants to close many VA Clinics nationwide; and replace them with community-based outpatient clinics, that provide less or a total loss of health care services for Veterans, especially in rural areas.

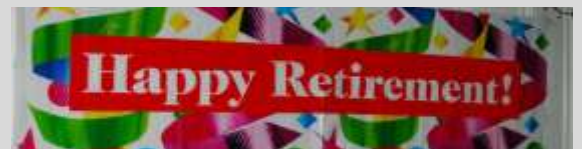
Project 2025 would call for the privatization of the VA Health Care, but also the Department of Defense Tricare System for those on active duty in the military and their families. This will increase health care costs by forcing those with Tricare medical benefits to use private heath insurance providers.

If Project 2025 plan is implemented, it would be the end of Veterans VA Health Care and cause a increase in veteran homelessness and suicides. APWU veterans and civilians, Project 2025 is not our friend; Project 2025 seeks to destroy us. Hands off our veterans heath care benefits.

For more information; visit the Veterans Health Care Policy Institute (VHPI) at: [veteranspoliy.org](http://veteranspoliy.org)

Jennifer Thank you for your time and membership to the APWU. Here is to a long and healthy retirement. The following members have retired since Pay Period 1/2025:

Joanne Birge	Bruce Bolkema	Suzanne Boyd	Faron Brewster	Donna Brown
Betty Butler	Linda Chandler	Nena Dunn	Michelle Endres	Karen Ford
Jon Frazier	Artemio Garcia	Rhonda Gifford	Patricia Grose	Tawny Hart
Theresa Helmka	David Janes	Marchell Kilpatrick	Michael Kohlhas	Michelle Leach
Michelle Maier	Janice Mason	Yolanda Matson	Nancy McCall	Dana McLean
Melvin Miller	Sheryl Mol	Deborah Paradowski	Ronald Perrin	Kathleen Radlinski
Daniel Reid	Jeffrey Schellinger	Daniel Schultz		
Clare Sprague	Quynh Thai	Mary Thompson		
Brian Wiersema	David Zerfas			



## Associate Office Scuttle

By Dana McLean -

Steward @ Newaygo & Grant & MPWU Clerk Craft Director

### Let's Build POWER in the Western Michigan Area Local

I had the honor of attending the 2025 POWER Conference on behalf of the Western Michigan Area Local.

I want to take a moment to share with you what POWER is, where it started, and why we need to bring that spirit home.

**What is POWER?** POWER stands for **Post Office Women for Equal Rights**. It's a national program of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) dedicated to promoting equality, leadership, and empowerment—not just for women, but for *all* postal workers. POWER helps ensure that fairness, dignity, and opportunity are more than just words in our workplace—they are the foundation of our union's strength.

Through POWER, we tackle issues that impact our members every day: inequality, harassment, discrimination, and the barriers that can prevent good people from reaching their full potential. POWER also focuses on education, mentoring, community service, and making sure the union is a place where every member can thrive.

**When did POWER begin?** POWER was born at the **1994 APWU National Convention**. It started when women from across the country came together and said, *enough is enough*. They recognized that for our union to truly represent *all* its members, we needed a dedicated group that would lift up the voices of women and promote equal rights in every corner of the Postal Service.

Since that day, POWER has grown into a vital force within the APWU—offering workshops, outreach programs, leadership development, and advocacy that benefit all members, regardless of gender. It's a program that reminds us that the labor movement isn't just about contracts and paychecks—it's about people, fairness, and solidarity.

**Why does POWER matter here and now?** Because we are at a crossroads. Our workplaces are changing, and so are the challenges we face. Now, more than ever, we need to make sure that our union is inclusive, strong, and ready to fight for *everyone*. POWER gives us the tools to do that.

It's about creating a safe space where ideas can be shared, where future leaders can be nurtured, and where no one feels invisible or unheard. It's about building a stronger Western Michigan Area Local by empowering our members to step up, speak out, and stand together.

Now is the time to form a **POWER committee right here at home**. We need women who are ready to make a

difference—women who believe in fairness, opportunity, and the strength of solidarity. Together, we can organize educational events, mentor new members, support our communities, and ensure that our union continues to be a force for good in the workplace and beyond.



**Calling all women!** If you're passionate about equality... if you want to help shape the future of our local... if you're ready to roll up your sleeves and be part of something bigger—this is your invitation. Join our POWER committee and let's create the change we want to see.

**Contact me today at:** [danamcleanapwu@gmail.com](mailto:danamcleanapwu@gmail.com)  
**Call or text:** 231-638-7290

**A final thought:** As the great labor leader **Mary Harris "Mother" Jones** said, *"Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living."*

Let's honor that legacy by working together to build a union where *everyone* has the power.

In solidarity,

Dana



*Looking for answers? Make sure to check out:*  
**WWW.WMAL.ORG**

*To review:*

- ☒ Meeting Minutes
- ☒ Contact information for stewards and officers
- ☒ Job bids and awards
- ☒ Upcoming events  
*and so much more!*

*Also join our Facebook Page/Group!*



*(Continued from page 3) - Long and Short of It continued...*

With that being said, I can not stress this enough! If you are a clerk in an Associate Office, even if you are under TL-3 now, and go under TL-5, you are required to have, at a minimum, HazWopper training. Once, and if, you go under TL-5, the handbook is clear - you must go through the CTC training. TL-5 is a team concept cleaning, even if it is a team of one. For safety sakes, you must be trained with the chemicals that are used.

**Retirements** – we have had a LOT of them. With the VERA that occurred on April 30, 2025, to even now, we have people retiring each month. I have compiled a list of those who have retired since the beginning of the year. As I stated in their letters that are included in their retirement packet, I wish each of you a long and healthy retirement.

With that being said, there are some who have retired are receiving invoices/letters of demand for negative annual leave and other debts at the time of their retirement. The retirees can file a grievance and the collections are to be stayed under the contract; however, if the accounting office is not notified of the grievance the collection process will continue. In order to stop collections an Employee Debt Modification Request must be filed by management online through the eIWS Online OLF. The Union and members do not have access to this form. The APWU recommends that you make sure management completes this form during the step 1 grievance meeting. If the form is not completed, Accounting will not be made aware to stop the collection and could possibly send the debt to outside agencies like the IRS for collection. The use of this form is for all debt related grievances, including for active employees who receive letters of demand and initiate grievances.

**Elections** – Local and National. The ballots for the National Elections will be placed in the mail between September 10 – 15, 2025. You need to have these returned to the PO Box ASAP. At the time of this writing, I do not have the required date of return; however, since they are announcing the results on October 7<sup>th</sup>, it doesn't give much time. As with the Contract Ratification, the local membership voted to have a contest. Ten (10) members will be chosen at random by the company who oversees and conducts the election (American Arbitration Association) from those who voted. Those 10 members will receive \$50 checks.

At the time of this writing, the local executive board took a position not to endorse any candidate. While this may be changed at the upcoming meeting in September, and if it does, it will be posted with the minutes of the meeting; however, as with all endorsements, it is still your choice and your vote. I can provide you with information on the candidates running, if you so desire. Please contact me if you want to know more. On a semi-personal note being that she is from our local – Central Region Coordinator Amy Puhalski is unopposed for

her position, thus she will remain our Central Region Coordinator for another three years. Congratulations Amy.

**Local Elections** – Within this edition, I have quoted the constitutional language regarding the elections and Executive Board positions. Nominations for the 2026-2028 Executive Board will take place at the October 2025 General Membership meeting. At the September 2025 meeting, the Election committee will be voted in by the membership in attendance. If you want to run for an Executive Board position, please make sure to either attend the October meeting or have someone there nominate you. To be eligible, you must be a member in good standing, and have not been in a management position for at least 12 months prior to nomination (see full rules in the constitution).

**GR Plant Maintenance Changes** – the union has been notified that management wants to change the maintenance window for the machines in the Grand Rapids Plant. At this time, I have been meeting with management in an attempt to minimize the impact that the “new” maintenance windows will cause. For those who have already asked and saw the proposals can attest, some of the changes that they are trying to implement do not have any rhyme or reason to them. There is no need to uproot and change the hours of amount of employees' management currently is proposing. However, one thing is for sure, having MM-7s on Tour 2 will be no more. Due to the new processing of mail being done earlier, with the routes changes that have been and are currently occurring, bringing the mail to the plant sooner and earlier, Tour 2 is pretty much going to be an operational tour. That being said, per the National Agreement and Step 4 sign-offs; MM-7s are not supposed to be working during Operational Maintenance (OPMS); unless it is along the same time of Preventative Maintenance (PM) windows. Management currently looking at moving most of the Preventative Routes to Tour 1. I will update when I know more.

**Need Stewards** – like an old record, I keep saying this. We need people to step up. However, with that being said, we need people who are at work to step up. One thing the board currently looks at prior to certifying a member to become a steward of the local is what their attendance is like. The craft directors and the board itself has taken the position that if you are not at work consistently, how can you represent the membership? By law, we cannot look at absences covered under FMLA. The Stewards Training manual from APWU states the Duties of the Shop Steward – “It is a mutual benefit...to have shop stewards available, during working hours, to discuss problems and potential grievances with members of the bargaining unit.” It goes on to state: “The Steward Should: Be a respected leader of his/her section or tour.” This is why I believe the board has decided not to certify someone who has a high level of absenteeism.

*Mike*

# Leave – What is the Real Story

By Omar Gonzalez  
Western Region Coordinator

**You earn leave, it's yours!** Pursuant to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) Articles 3,5,10,19 management must comply with the leave regulations outlined in Chapter 510 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM).

Far too often, managers ignore or misapply those rules. Here are some common misapplications that must be challenged. If these happen to you, ask to see your steward immediately!

**THREE ABSENCES IN 90 DAYS TRIGGER DISCIPLINE:** There is no such rule. It's the supervisor's review of the attendance record on a case-by-case basis in light of "all" relevant evidences and circumstances, NOT any set number of absences that determine whether discipline is warranted. (JCIM 10 page 3)

**NEEDS OF THE SERVICE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR LEAVE REQUESTS:** The supervisor must also consider your individual welfare. Failure to do so likely violates the CBA. (ELM 511.1)

**PS 3971s ONCE ISSUED BY eRMS CALL IN SYSTEM CAN'T BE CHANGED:** It is your leave request. You complete the form when you return. You need to review and change the Leave Type, Remarks, Hours boxes then sign and date the form. Not being permitted to do so likely violates the CBA (JCIM 10 page 12; F21Ex 142.31)

**MUST SIGN THAT FORM INSTRUCTIONS WERE ISSUED AND UNDERSTOOD:** Bosses cannot require you to sign or initial that you read and understand instructions or face discipline. (Step 4 N4N-5C-11608)

**COVID POLICIES EXPIRED, ABSENCES FOR COVID NO LONGER PROTECTED:** COVID has not disappeared, nor have protections under the CBA for contagious diseases. Ignoring the conditions for authorizing leave for contagious diseases likely violates the CBA. (ELM 513.32)

**YOU MUST USE LITEBLUE OR APP TO REPORT AN ABSENCE:** What is required is to notify management of the inability to report as soon as possible. Calling the 877 number is the recommended method. Be Warned: when using the apps, you agree to waive your right to privacy and your device may be monitored. If the boss requires you to use the apps, the CBA is likely violated. (JCIM 10 page 4,5)

**DEEMS DESIRABLE ALLOWS SUPERVISORS TO DEMAND DOCUMENTATION FOR ALL ABSENCES:**

An absence of 1 to 3 days can be substantiated by an employee's stated explanation. Demands for medical documentation deemed desirable for protection of the service cannot be unreasonable or arbitrary and must be stated by the Supervisor in eRMS. (JCIM pages 4;13)

**NOT REPORTING AS SCHEDULED IS AN AUTOMATIC AWOL:** There are exceptions to reporting as scheduled. Documentation may be submitted later. AWOL is serious but not automatic. AWOLs must be challenged. (ELM 665.42)

**ALL CALL-INS ARE UNSCHEDULED ABSENCES:**

An absence of more than one day does not mean all the days are automatically marked unscheduled depending on when notice was given. The first "may" be unscheduled, but subsequent days could be marked as scheduled, and challenged when marked or listed in discipline. (EL 510-83-9; APMG Gildea '84 policy)

**IT IS LEGITIMATE TO HAVE EMPLOYEES SIGN PS 3971s AT AN INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW—**

3971s are to be completed upon return from an absence and acted upon "approved or disapproved." If disapproved, a reason must be stated, and a copy issued to the employee. (JCIM 10 page 12; ELM 513.342)

There are many more misapplications. Stewards need to fully investigate and document facts to determine if CBA violations

occurred. *Do not let bosses abuse your leave, challenge violations!*

*Omar*



## **A Landmark Agreement for Postal Workers: The APWU-USPS Deal Signed July 11, 2025**

On July 11, 2025, APWU President Mark Dimondstein and postal leadership formalized the three-year National Collective Bargaining Agreement covering nearly 200,000 postal workers across all APWU crafts. With a resounding 95% ratification vote on July 10, the contract became official, locking in a powerful package of protections and gains.

### **Strong Pay Increases and Inflation Protection**

- ⇒ Career employees receive annual general wage increases: 1.3% (retroactive to Nov 16, 2024), 1.4% in Nov 2025, and 1.5% in Nov 2026.
- ⇒ Six full cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) tied to the CPI are scheduled roughly every six months—from early 2025 through mid-2027—providing meaningful inflation buffers. PSEs, who don't get COLA, receive extra 1% annual increases plus 50 cents/hour after 26 weeks.

### **Enhanced Job Security and Fair Work Rules**

- ◆ No-layoff protections extend even to career employees with less than six years of service (tens of thousands), so long as they were on payroll as of September 20, 2024.
- ◆ The 50-mile limit on excessing work assignments remains intact, limiting forced relocation far from home.

### **Closing the Wage Gap & Better Career Progression**

- ◇ Steps Grade 4's Step-JJ and entry Step-GG in lower tiers are eliminated, improving upward mobility.
- ◇ New top steps added for Grades 4–7 (e.g. Step J for Grade 4), along with upgrading Grade 3 to Grade 4 by September 2026, reducing pay disparities across tiers.

### **Increased Shift and Uniform Benefits**

- Night differential rates are boosted by 4% in September 2025, with a further 2% increase in September 2026—the first significant increase in decades.
- Uniform allowances are also increased as part of the broader contract improvements.

### **No Givebacks — And Continued Support for USPS Mission**

- All advances were gained without concessions—no givebacks to seniority, holidays, grievance rights, or hours of work. The agreement supports USPS's broader modernization goals and its “Delivering for America” mission to improve reliability and service while maintaining a stable, unionized workforce.

### **Broader Impact**

The contract stands as a counterweight to mounting pressures, including threats of postal privatization and ongoing political attacks against federal workers. It extends the union's historic legacy of protecting diverse, middle-class careers across communities nationwide.

In summary, the July 11, 2025 agreement marks a significant victory for APWU membership: ensuring real wage growth, robust inflation protection, stronger job security, more equitable career progression, and improved working conditions—all achieved with no concessions. This deal not only protects existing workers but also positions the APWU and USPS to meet future challenges with strength and solidarity.



**Updated Non-Member / Membership Eligible List** - This list is current as of July 31, 2025 downloaded from the APWU National membership files. If you see a name on this list who shouldn't be listed here (they are a member, or thought they were a member), please contact your steward or officer and let them know so they can ensure the list is updated. Just remember, the local has a \$50 membership bounty for each new member signed up by another member.

## Membership Eligible List

### Grand Rapids Installation (495)

#### Clerks (Career)

David Abraczinskas	Ali Ahmed	Jennifer Baadke	Lucas Baadke
Tia Bibler	Justin Braun	Steven Carlson	Sopita Decharat
Benjamin Dehaan	Tabitha Edmonds	Jenetta Epps	Robert Flikkema
Cheryl Fryling	Nicole Hodges	Darnell Johnson	Rick Manning
Eliel Martinez	Tamara McNabb	Ronda Myers	Teyarra Nathan
Matthew Piccolo	Lisa Robson	Michael Rusky	Wesley Schafer
Richard Shimmin	Nathan Stevens	Robbin Stevenson	David Verkade
Michelle Webb	Robert Wisner		

#### Postal Support Employees (PSEs) Clerks

Brendan Conners	Mirela Gaita	Cameron Hathaway	Joshua Holley
Kristine Johnson	Eriel Mutoagoma	Nicole Pineiro-Carrasq	David Ross
Blake Sandee	Antwanette Spencer	Sonya Todd	Michael VanMeter

### Motor Vehicle Service (TTO & VMF) - Moses Kil

#### Maintenance

David Chiodo	Erin Crouner	John Cushman	Charles Goedken
Donald Merchant	Shawn Palmer	David Pieper	Amber Wiley
Diane Williams			

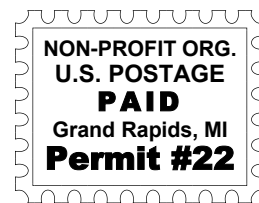
### Associate Offices (493/494) - All Crafts

(To see list of all offices represented by the local, go to WMAL.org)

**Allendale** - Sage Kramer    **Big Rapids** - Edwin Courser; Alyssa Paez    **Blanchard** - Kenneth Lau  
**Bradley** - Grace Norris    **Branch** - Serena Collins    **Dorr** - Kevin Myers  
**Comstock Park** - Jeremy Aldrich    **Fennville** - Barbara Hahn    **Fountain** - Debra Mohr  
**Free Soil** - Toni Burke    **Grand Haven** - Marie Bart; Aiyanna Dixon; Kenneth Lucus; Rolando Vela  
**Hamilton** - Kimberly Hamm    **Holland** - Jason Auchtung; Warren Bismarck; Tyler Cheek;  
**Holland (cont.)** - Morgan Dopp; Samantha Fealy; Jamie Inthisane; Eugene Marciniak; Deanna Runions;  
**Holland (cont.)** - Bryon Warren    **Hudsonville** - Austin VanderLaan    **Jenison** - Jerry Arens  
**Lowell** - Jessica Bradley    **Macatawa** - Craig Underly    **Morley** - Linder Meredith  
**Newaygo** - Cleveland Agee    **New Era** - Steven Knoblauch    **Nunica** - Jordan Davis  
**Paris** - Olivia Whitcomb    **Sand Lake** - Valarie Mourer    **Scottville** - Ashlee Parks  
**Shelby** - Hope Ernst; Roxann Vaniaan    **Walhalla** - Brian Melvin    **Wayland** - Janine Rairigh  
**West Olive** - Shirely Sukes ; Audra Warrick    **Zeeland** - Matt Locher; Linda Hagger

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

*Address Service Requested*



## *Dates/Information to Remember:*

### **WMAL Retiree Chapter Meetings**

are held at the Union Hall  
(2554 Burlingame Ave SW; Wyoming, MI 49509)  
on the second Tuesday in

February, April, June, September and November -  
starting at 11:00 a.m.

2025 - September 9th & November 11th

2026 - February 10th; April 7th; June 9th;  
September 8th; & November 10th

**Deadline - for the Next Edition of  
the WMAL Voice is:  
September 30, 2025**

### **General Membership Union Meetings**

Held at the Union Hall—2554 Burlingame Ave SW; Wyoming, MI 49509

**Next Meeting:** September 6, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m.

## **HALL RENTAL INFORMATION** for APWU MEMBERS & the GENERAL PUBLIC 2554 Burlingame Ave SW; Wyoming, Michigan 49509

<b>Rental Rates/Breakdown</b> <small>(as of January 1, 2025)</small>	<b>WMAL Member</b> <small>(Active &amp; Retiree*)</small>	<b>Non-Profit</b> <small>(Meetings Only (no events))</small>	<b>General Public</b>
<b>Security Deposit:</b> <small>(Will be returned if hall is cleaned after rental and no damage found)</small>	\$300	None	\$400
<b>Agent Fee:</b>	None	None	\$100
<b>Hall Rental Fee:</b>	\$350	\$150	\$1000
<b>Total Amount:</b>	\$650	\$150	\$1500

\*Retirees must be a member of the APWU local retiree chapter to receive rate. Member must be present throughout the entire event (including setup).