



# MICHIGAN PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTER

The official publication of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union

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## Upcoming Events:

### Member Orientation Seminar

*July 19, 2007*

Lansing Holiday Inn-South

### Member Orientation Seminar

*October 18, 2007*

Grand Rapids Airport Hilton

### MPFFU Safety & Health Seminar

*October 29-30, 2007*

Lansing Holiday Inn-South

## District Meetings:

### 1st District

*October 12, 2007*

Iron Mountain

### 2nd District

*September 24, 2007*

Big Rapids

### 3rd District

*October 5, 2007*

Bay City

### 4th District

*October 4, 2007*

Livonia

### 5th District

*September 25, 2007*

Lansing

### 6th District

*October 3, 2007*

Sterling Heights



## MPFFU Legislative Summit

*May 2-3, 2007*

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# — FYI —

## You too can be a contributor

It's very easy to do. Just send us a story, a picture, or both. It can be about anything that is going on in your local or general information that has something to do with unionism or being a firefighter (union event or of fire, rescue or EMS incidents involving local members) and we will publish it on the web and/or magazine.

*Please submit your material ASAP to:*

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**Note:** I also wish to remind you that it is the policy of the MPFF editorial staff to not publish any information that is sent anonymously.

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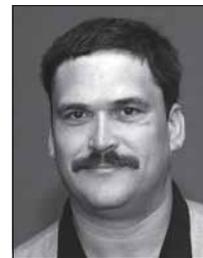


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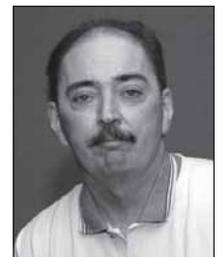
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It seems like it's been an extraordinarily busy time for your state union. Work at the State Capitol and providing services/training to local unions encompasses the greatest share of our time. We continue to see many changes occurring in both areas. I will begin with a legislative report.

## Legislation

Because of the financial issues confronting Michigan's budget process, this legislative session at the Capitol continues to be contentious. With several proposals for revising Michigan's failing tax system floating around the Capitol, budget and tax restructuring continue to be at the forefront of every issue that comes up.

State revenue sharing is an important element of the tax system. Permanent funding for the Bureau of Fire Services is another priority issue that is on the table during these budget talks. MPFFU is engaged in the budget process ensuring that these issues along with firefighter and public safety are a part of every discussion.

Besides being involved in budget issues, MPFFU is pursuing its own legislative agenda and monitoring other legislation that impacts us. Here are some of the priority issues we have been working on:

- **Cancer Presumption:** On April 17, hearings were held in both Senate and House committees on SB 102 and HB 4401 respectively. The IAFF provided an expert witness, Dr. Michael Levine, to give testimony on the connection between certain types of cancer and firefighting. Todd Stanaway, a Westland firefighter for 12 years, provided testimony on his job and his personal struggle with brain cancer. Both committees listened to testimony only and will vote on the bills at a later date.

We continue to press the cancer presumption bills with legislators. We are seeking committee votes as soon as possible so the bills move on to the floor of both the Senate and House. We are asking every firefighter to contact their representative and senator and urge them to support and vote for this legislation.

- **Legislation was introduced, HB 4213,** that would amend P.A. 312 limiting firefighters rights in binding arbitration of contract disputes. This legislation would turn the clock back 40 years and begin the destruc-

tion of a law that has been shown to effectively resolve contract disputes fairly.

- **HBs 4246 – 4266** would amend current laws and remove the protection provided for employees' wages, benefits, and pensions when local governments join together to form Authorities for providing services such as fire and EMS. The sponsors of these bills say that the current laws inhibit cities and townships from forming Authorities.

- **Another bill** that would produce dire consequences for unions in Michigan is HB 4455, the so-called right-to-work legislation. This legislation would restrict the rights of unions and the workers they represent, creating a "right-to-work for less" state.

I have listed just a few of the bills introduced this session that will impact firefighters if adopted. The MPFFU web site provides details on all of the legislation and how you can contact your elected representatives in Lansing to express your views. MPFFU will continue its work at the Capitol ensuring that firefighter issues are at the forefront.

## IAFF – State and Provincial Associations Services

Last fall, at a meeting of the Federation of State and Provincial Professional Firefighters, a discussion took place with IAFF general president Harold Schaitberger regarding the status of state unions within IAFF structure. Points were raised regarding the role of state unions as affiliates of the IAFF in a number of areas: delivery of services to local unions; coordination of political action efforts, i.e., candidate endorsements and support; sharing of information, databases, communications, and technology; providing education and training to local unions; and identifying the position and role of state and provincial associations in the IAFF structure.

Following the discussion, general president Schaitberger scheduled a meeting with representatives of FSPPF. I was fortunate to be selected as one of the five state presidents to participate in the meeting in Washington this past April. Five members of the IAFF executive board were also present at the meeting; including 8th district vice president Tom Miller.

We discussed the history of both the IAFF and state/provincial unions and their various



roles. Some examples of IAFF services were identified: passing federal legislation supporting firefighters, i.e., line-of-duty death benefit, safety and health; political action in federal elections; developing training programs on a wide variety subjects that assist local union leaders in their work; research and database capabilities; EMS programs; along with a multitude of services in other areas as needed by local unions.

Initially, a state union's sole responsibility was to work in the legislature and pass laws creating collective bargaining/binding arbitration, health and safety protections, pension systems, and other state laws that would benefit firefighters.

Due to the successes of MPFFU in the legislature over the past 40 years, requests from local unions for assistance have increased dramatically, expanding MPFFU's operations. At the direction of delegates at conventions, MPFFU now provides a wide array of services to locals. A few examples: legislative representation at the state Capitol; affordable, Michigan specific training programs and seminars; assistance to locals from MPFFU executive board members for bargaining, grievances, and most other issues locals' face; contract database accessible online; and a host of other services too numerous to mention here that assist locals in their day-to-day operations.

Recognizing that the roles of both the IAFF and state unions have changed significantly over the years, there was agreement at the meeting to look for ways to effectively use state and provincial organizations within the IAFF structure to deliver effective, efficient services to local unions. The goal is to coordinate services eliminating duplication and providing IAFF locals with the best service possible for their per capita dollars. We're looking forward to working more closely with the IAFF in providing an even higher level of services and assistance to local unions.

# MPFFU FIRE PAC

## *Thank You To All Of The MPFFU Fire PAC Contributors*

*The following have contributed since January 1, 2007*

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# SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

## Takin' Care of Business

So far, 2007 has been a very busy year for members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union. The MPFFU Executive Board authorized and conducted a two-day Strategic Planning meeting, a two-day Collective Bargaining Seminar, a two-day Union Administration seminar, six Spring District meetings, two Member Orientation Seminars, and the annual MPFFU Legislative Summit. Members attending these functions were presented with a wealth of knowledge as well as excellent opportunities for networking with fellow union members. Congratulations to those of you who attended one or more of these functions. Your attendance and participation not only contributed to making these functions a success, it confirmed your dedication and desire to be a better union officer.

## What a Fool Believes

Ever hear someone say they hate politics? Maybe you've even said it yourself? Whether you like it or not, as a public employee, politics affect your life even more than it does most other people. The fact that you are even employed as a firefighter, the hours you work, your pay, your health insurance, your pension, your vacation time, and all your other benefits are directly related to political decisions made at the local, state, or federal level. Your turn-out equipment, your apparatus, whether or not you provide EMS or Paramedic service to your citizens and even your fire station amenities are determined by politics. Can you afford not to get involved?

## Right Here – Right Now

Like it or not, financial contributions to candidate election campaigns are often what makes the difference between winning an election and losing an election. All of our jobs are much easier if we elect officials that support firefighters and our issues. There are approximately 5,400 members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union and yet there are only about 300 members that have ever made a contribution to the MPFFU FIRE PAC. Are you a contributor to the MPFFU FIRE PAC? There are many ways to make a contribution. We accept one time payments by personal check, you can sign up for monthly

automatic contributions of \$5 or more from your checking account or credit card, you can register for MPFFU events with a personal check made out to FIRE PAC, or you purchase a MPFFU FIRE PAC golf shirt or windbreaker. Call the MPFFU office at 1.800.886.7338 to sign up today or download a sign-up form at [mpffu.org](http://mpffu.org). Help your brothers and sisters carry the load.

## Politics 101

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union conducted a Legislative Summit on May 2-3 in Lansing. The primary purpose of the summit was to educate and prepare our members to interact with their State Legislator and State Senator on the legislative issues that are currently affecting union firefighters. Our main issues were Cancer Presumption, protecting PA 312, Funding for the Bureau of Fire Services, and State Revenue Sharing. On the first day, members attended an educational workshop and on the second day, they had breakfast with legislators and then went to the State Capitol to meet with them. Those that attended did an exceptional job lobbying their elected officials. Unfortunately, they also had to represent the locals that didn't send anyone to the event. Although they did a great job representing those that were absent, many legislators were very disappointed to find out that no firefighters from their district were in attendance. Politicians are always more interested in hearing what their own constituents have to say. In fact, not having anyone from a legislator's district in attendance can actually be harmful to the MPFFU legislative agenda.

Donating time and money to get fire friendly officials elected into office is only the first step of being politically active. Establishing, cultivating, and maintaining a relationship with elected officials is even more important. If you care about your job, this is not a task that you can just leave for someone else to do.

We recognize that on any given day, there will always be some people that will not be able to attend, but this is one event that requires that every local be represented. Please make sure someone from your local attends next year.

*Secretary-Treasurer*

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## Who Are We?

The MPFFU has scheduled two additional Member Orientation seminars in 2007. These seminars were developed for ALL MPFFU members, new and old. Find out what the benefits are of belonging to the IAFF and the MPFFU. Understand why unions are more important now than they have ever been. Longtime members that have attended state that they wish this would have been available for them when they were new. Registration information can be found on the MPFFU website. ([www.mpffu.org](http://www.mpffu.org)) Also, if you are not registered to use the members only section of the MPFFU website, you are missing out on a lot of information that is available. Sign up today. It's easy.

## Ticket to Ride

Paying your union dues is like buying a ticket for a train ride. You still have to get on the train after you pay for the ticket or you won't go anywhere. Take advantage of your MPFFU membership. Attend our functions, register for our website, provide input, be a participant, not a spectator!

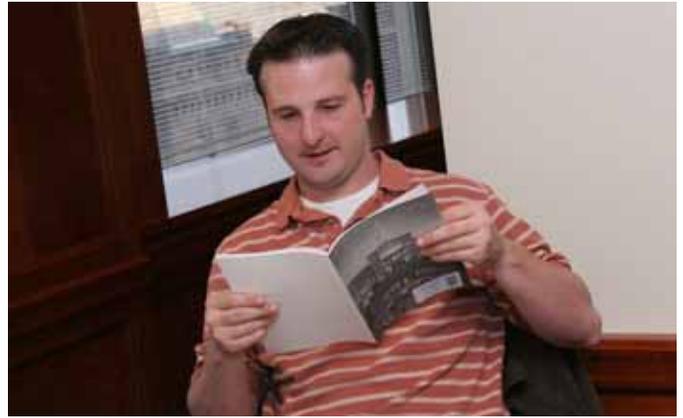
## Safety First

Mark your calendars! The dates for the upcoming MPFFU Safety & Health Seminar are October 29-30, 2007 at the Holiday Inn South in Lansing. The agenda for the seminar is almost completed and the MPFFU Safety & Health Committee has put together an impressive and wide variety of workshop offerings for this two day event. They have also secured two well known speakers to give general session presentations.

Due to popular demand, **Dr Larry Blum** is returning to Michigan again to discuss his ideas about how to keep the demands and stresses of being a firefighter from adversely affecting your health, your family, and your

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# MPFFU Legislative Summit **May 2-3, 2007**



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# MPFFU Legislative Summit **May 2-3, 2007**



# MPFFU Legislative Summit **May 2-3, 2007**



# HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

## 1st District

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Budget cuts have again affected the Bureau of Fire Services. The current year budget has been reduced by ten percent and further cuts may be needed if the State budget issues are not resolved soon. Governor Granholm has proposed a rebuild of the state tax structure based on being tax neutral to the taxpayers in the state. With this new structure revenue could grow as the economy improves, however some in the legislature want to cut spending further and until some compromise is worked out nobody knows what is going to happen.

The direct effect of budget cuts to the Michigan Fire Fighters Training Council is the loss of all contract training coordinators. Without them there will be no evaluations of probationary instructors or monitoring of classes being taught. In the short term this has been very inconvenient for those firefighters wanting to become instructors, if this continues long term the quality of the programs offered will be jeopardized.

As the Chairman of the MFFTC, I intend to continue to improve the training standards of firefighters and fire officers. In the near future I hope to have the company officer level 3 updated. The new standard will likely involve the intermediate (ICS-300) and advanced (ICS-400) incident command training offered thru the national fire academy. If you are not aware, FEMA has required this new level of training to qualify for federal funding. If you're confused about NIMS don't feel bad, there's a lot of it going around. Because of the wide range of responders possible, FEMA has provided several avenues to achieve NIMS compliancy. The NIMS Integration Center developed the National Standard Curriculum. Based on those standards the NFA, NWCG, EMI, USDA, EPA, Coast Guard

and Private Vendors have developed programs. To achieve just the NIMS certificate you can attend any course of the above agencies.

The MFFTC has adopted the National Fire Academy all hazard ICS that is geared to operational responders. NIMS ICS for the fire service, which is an updated version of the ICS offered for many years, meets the NIMS 100 and 200 levels. H-465 Intermediate ICS for expanding incidents for operational responders meets the NIMS 300. H-467 Advanced ICS for command and general staff, complex incidents and MACS for operational first responders meets the NIMS 400. For more information about NIMS, go to [nimsonline.com](http://nimsonline.com). With so many requirements for ICS I'm sure most of you are tired of hearing about it but remember that firefighter safety and effective incident command go hand in hand.

The MPFFU and the Fire Service Coalition will continue to seek funding for firefighters to receive the personnel, equipment, and training needed to perform the best that we can.

## 2nd District

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It does not feel right typing this "spring" article while it is snowing. I hope by the time you read this, its nice and warm outside. It has been a long winter and there has been a lot of union activity both at the state and local level.

### Education

Over the past few months the MPFFU has hosted many educational opportunities for local leaders and members all across the state. These seminars offer a chance to get some excellent information while also networking with other members dealing with many of the same issues. The three main

seminars included training in negotiations, local administration and political action. There were also three member orientation classes. They were held in Grand Rapids, Dearborn and Flint. The member orientation class is a great way to find out what the union, MPFFU and IAFF does for you. Try to attend this class if you have not done so in the past. There is a lot of good information, networking opportunities and a free lunch. Whether you are veteran or a rookie there is a class offered for you. The chance to discuss important issues with other brothers and sisters from across the state is priceless in itself. Many of these classes are interactive. If you are newer to the game, it is a great place to ask questions in a non-intimidating forum. If you are a seasoned veteran, your input can help others in the class and make it a better experience. Everyone always picks something up either way. I hope to see you at a class in the near future.

### Around the Second

Negotiations seem to be the main issue this spring for many of the locals in the second district. Seven locals will be sitting down at the table over the next few months. *Cadillac L-704* and *Egelston Township L-3901* both settled their contracts over the winter. *Plainfield Township L-2559* had 312 briefs due in April. *Manistee L-645* is dealing with the police trying to take over EMS, which could lead to public safety. They are in the process of fighting this on several fronts. *Norton Shores L-2559* and *Muskegon Township L-4132* are both in the process of implementing health and wellness programs. *Wyoming L-2758* has all of their members back from lay-off. This happened through retirements while they continue to fight for better staffing. The Grand Rapids metropolitan area locals are starting to deal with automatic aid and/or consolidation rumors. They have all met and are in the process of collecting additional information and preparing arguments. On a side note, I would like to thank the leaders and members of *Grand Rapids L-366* and *Kentwood L-3174* for taking care of our own. Ken Howe, a past member of *Jackson L-1306*,

*Continued on next page...*

# HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

was caught in a fire in his own house. Members of these two locals helped take care of his family while he was in the hospital in Grand Rapids. This is what sets us apart—thanks for making us all proud to be union firefighters.

## Your Rights

This is just a quick note to remind you to get representation if you are in a meeting and may be disciplined. Use your Weingarten rights. This protects you, the local, and the process. This could be a meeting with your chief, supervisor, or even if you are asked to write a letter. Get the union involved if you suspect discipline. The union representative is an active participant and it has been ruled again lately that management cannot choose your representative for you. This is much too big of a topic to cover in a short paragraph. If you have questions, talk to your local leadership or attend a class. The point here is just to remind you to get a representative and do not let them tell you otherwise—it's your right!

Remember that this local, state, and international union is yours. Stay active and involved to make it the best it can be. Have you ever wondered what would happen to your local and your contract if the leadership in your local did not dedicate the time to defend and improve them? I hear members say they do not have time to attend meetings. Meanwhile, the local leadership dedicates hours daily to run the local. Next time you see them say thanks, because it can be a time consuming thankless job.

Have a great summer, go Tigers, and most of all stay safe.

Get More  
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## 3rd District

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To all members of the 3rd District and the MPFFU wishing all you a welcomed springtime hello.

At the time of this article, members of the MPFFU are locked in battle once again with governmental units over the lack of revenue. Our locals are being attacked on many different fronts, reduced staffing, threats of PSO or volunteer supplements, reductions in pension benefits, and increased employee health care costs.

How are our members going to combat these attacks? The answer is simple, **POLITICAL ACTION!** Each member must take ownership in this battle. Our republican legislators are still convinced that we can cut our way out of revenue shortfall. In turn, local units are following their lead. This way of thinking is nothing but smoke and mirrors to believe that reduction in services will lead to funding solutions and balanced budgets.

The effort that is needed to educate our legislators on the impact this is having on our service delivery, firefighter safety, and civilian safety cannot be accomplished at the state level alone. Nor can this battle be won by just the local executive boards; each one of us must take part. How often have you individually contacted your local commissioners, city managers or township officials or state legislators?

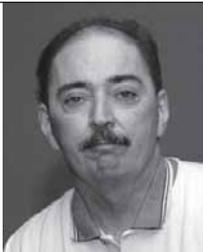
If we continue to wait to be reactionary we will lose this battle. Local executive boards should be developing business relationships with local officials before a crisis develops. Educating these officials as to what we do as firefighters is critical for them to know our mission and services we provide. Further delays will only result in a continued reduction in our benefits and staffing levels.

Together we can make a difference, the struggles will not be easy, but to ignore the issues may result in the loss of your job. Many of you are making a difference, now it is up to the rest of you to assist your brother or sister in securing our future as professional firefighters.

As the IAFF said, **A Bold Union, A Proud Profession, A Brighter Future!** Let's take a stand and make our collective voices heard from the local level to the State Capitol.

Stay safe, see you in the future.

## 4th District

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### The Ever Changing / Ever Challenged 4th

Many new issues have hit the 4th District recently. Some can have an impact on the whole MPFFU. These changes directly affect careers, benefits, wages and life styles. With the economy problems facing Michigan, it was certain that groups would try to squeeze money in our field. The only problem is that we have been stretched too thin already, causing challenges to our abilities to provide life saving skills and fire suppression timeliness.

Plymouth Township Firefighters are facing a difficult situation. The City of Plymouth, which is aligned with them, are promising to pull out from their alliance and possibly going PSO. This has been, until now, a well put together relationship that benefits the taxpayers and guarantees public safety. Unfortunately, money talks.

There has also been aligned with this discussions of consolidations with Northville Township, Westland, Canton and others. Fortunately, smart people have, for the moment, stepped back to think it out.

*Continued on next page...*

# HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

## Fire Authority

Locals from Allen Park, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, Southgate and Wyandotte have been involved in discussions with their cities over a full blown development of a Fire Authority.

A Fire Authority is developed under P.A. 57. It essentially is politically and legally formed. It takes possessions of these cities' physical possessions, stations, vehicles, manpower, taxes the communities for funding and becomes one big Local. One big Local because that is what is legally required.

This new fire department covers the physical areas of these cities. However, the devil is in the details. A new contract has to be created while incorporating the benefits in the original five. Seniority has to be defined. New work rules have to be promulgated. Titles and job descriptions written and awarded. Who goes where every day?

Most importantly, a large discussion has taken place over the use of Act 312 in the Authority. There are differing opinions on whether or not it is allowed in an Authority or not. Without it, our members participate in a management dominated form of right to work. Any bargaining impasse would go to the Authority until grieved.

As great an idea as some think it to be, our members stand to lose a lot if not done right. Working with these Locals, I can assure everyone that all stones are being overturned and lights are put into all the dark corners. No decisions have been made other than to participate in the process. These leaders are doing a great job.

## Ecorse

What can be said? If it can get worse, it does. Recently, one of the ambulances has been mothballed and a private ambulance brought in. Cameras and real time video has been placed in all open areas of the station and at least one member has been disciplined for a statement that was heard. Cameras and microphones have also been put in the one ambulance in all areas.

Grievances, injunctions, circuit court are all in play. A new rule was put into place that no one could leave the station for any reason. One member was threatened with discipline because he took the garbage out and it was witnessed via camera.

**Scott Douglas** and the Executive Board were recently asked what amount they would accept as a buy out because the Mayor wants to get rid of the fire department. His answer was that no amount would be acceptable because his membership loved their jobs! This is on top of having part-timers come in and be in charge of full-timers in order to get overtime costs down. This is in addition to constant daily intimidation of members so bad that, except for their incredible dedication to the residents of Ecorse and themselves, many or all would leave this environment.

The membership of Ecorse is truly a resilient and dedicated group. The attacks on them have been long and merciless. Many of you remember the physical fitness debacle of a few years ago where they attempted to fire many members until the IAFF stepped in with money and power.

Even in their toughest of times they stand tall. Better times have to be ahead.

## Detroit Continues The Battle

Two years after a massive restructuring plan hit Local 344, it continues to hold off a second wave. In July 2005, five companies were closed, 63 firefighters laid off, Fire Inspectors demoted and a Battalion closed with three Battalion Chiefs.

Building on that the City broke the law by proposing the second wave which would close 5-7 more companies, lay off 190 more firefighters, close four more Battalions, violate the staffing award of four persons per rig and change the duties of the Battalion Chiefs so that they would not respond to fires until after 4:00 p.m. and other draconian measures.

Fortunately, Detroit is in Act 312 arbitration and these changes violated the Act. A circuit Court and Appeals Court later, the city has dragged them into the Michigan Supreme Court where it was argued on April 10. The answer should be out in 2-9 months. In the meantime, the injunction against their proposed actions stays in place.

Thanks to all the members from other Locals who came in solidarity. A special thanks to the Lansing Local who surprised a bus load of firefighters with hot coffee and doughnuts. True Solidarity.

## Good News!

Congratulations to Monroe Local 326. They recently celebrated their 75th straight year of membership in the IAFF. They are the oldest affiliated Local in Michigan. Their celebration was well attended. A lot of retired members as well as spouses, families and friends were there to help honor the event.

## Other Items of Note

It was great to see so many members participate in the Local Union and New Member Seminars as well as the 4th District Meeting. All the programs and presenters did a good job. It was nice to see new programs and fresh approaches.

New faces, new ideas and new representatives for the next few decades. I don't know how they make them look so young these days.

See you around the District.

## 5th District

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How ready are you for retirement? Probably most of you are a long way from retirement and think very little about if you are going to have enough to retire on. Unfortunately, by the time you get close to your actual retirement date it may be too late. An article a couple years ago stated you should have 70% of your final wage amount to retire on. So if your final wage is around \$60,000 annually you would need \$42,000 to retire on. This assumes that you are debt free including your house being paid off. How many of you are going to be debt free including your mortgage by the time you retire? Many of our members are buying new houses and with it new mortgages in their 40s and 50s. Along with that are those who are starting families in their late 30s and 40s.

*Continued on next page...*

# HOT NEWS FROM THE DISTRICTS

These figures also assumed that along with that 80% you will be receiving social security. Many of our brothers and sisters are not in the social security system due to their defined benefit retirement system.

More current experts say you need 80% or more of your final wage to retire. How are you going to achieve that? Even if you have a 3.2% multiplier you would have to work 25 years to achieve that 80%. How many of you have a 3.2 multiplier? Even with a 3.2 multiplier what is that 80% amount going to be worth if you retire, live another 30 years and have no C.O.L.A. to deal with inflation? Any public pension system is not designed to be a complete answer to meet all your retirement needs.

Virtually all municipalities offer 457 plans to assist their employees with their retirement needs. The 457 is the equivalent to the private sector 401 plans. Our various pension committees (assuming your local has one) need to educate our members and particularly our newer members on the need for additional savings along with their pension so they may retire without worrying if they can meet their retirement needs. How difficult would it be as a new firefighter to put aside 1%, or more, of their salary in a pretax account at the beginning of their career and then as their wages increase, either by step raises or annual wage increase, to increase that amount each year? It may seem difficult when raising a family and buying a house but by taking a PORTION of their raise and adding it to the 457, by the end of their career and with financial planning, which is available through any 457 plan, a member should have enough money available to retire without worry.

As far as Defined Comp. plans go, here is an example. If a member starts out making \$35,000 per year and assuming a 3% increase in wages throughout their career, by the end of their 25th year of service they will be making \$60,984. If their defined contribution put into their account by their employer is 10% and assuming an AVERAGE return of 9% over the entire 25 years, the employee would have \$366,522 in their account. Sound like a lot? If you are making almost \$61,000 and have a balance of \$366,000 how long do you think that fund

will last for retirement? Again assuming 10% gains on your final account balance and withdrawing 80% of your FAC, the account would be depleted in 15 years. Then what?

This shows the real need for our members not to rely solely on their pension plans, whatever it may be, as a complete package for retirement. **Everyone** needs to supplement their pension with other savings devices so they may retire with enough money to meet their needs. We have worked hard and long at one of the best but most dangerous jobs there is and deserve to retire with dignity and enough money to enjoy retirement. Start now before it's too late.

## 6th District

<p><i>6th District VP</i> <b>Mark Docherty</b> 54465 Meadow Crest Circle Chesterfield, MI 48047 586-716-8264 (home) 586-716-3845 (fax) 586.243.9829 (cell) <a href="mailto:markdocherty@comcast.net">markdocherty@comcast.net</a></p>	
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We have heard it said many times, the most difficult and demanding position in the union is that of the local president. That has never been truer than what your local presidents and executive boards are facing in these new trying times. Of the 29 locals in the Sixth District, approx half are without a current contract and are in various stages of Act 312 and half of the remaining locals are beginning negotiations with a contract expiration date looming. Employers demanding unreasonable concessions in pensions, health care and manning being some of the key issues they are facing. I want to thank all the local presidents and e-board members for keeping up the difficult fight to protect our wages, hours and working conditions. All unions, public and private, are embattled in a fight to survive. With "Right to Work" lobbyist fighting to erode our rights, we as union members, brothers and sisters, need to promote unionism to anyone who will listen. We need to fully understand, that complacency is not how we will win this fight. It's

through political activism and public relations/education that we need to concentrate our fight and which will provide us with the best chance at success. Remember political activism doesn't just mean PAC money, it also includes all the non-economical methods of supporting candidates such as: screening of candidates for endorsement, placements of political signs, working polls on Election Day, literature drops, phone banks, photo ops, petition drives, fundraisers and many more. In what other job do you have the ability to have some effect on who your boss will be?

### Consolidation

Consolidation seems to be developing as the new fix-all put forth by many as the way to save municipalities from their economic issues they are facing today. Consolidation, if done right, could be a good thing for all. The problem comes when elected officials believe that through consolidation, they will see an immediate savings and relief from labor contracts that they feel are burdening their communities. The reality is the consolidation does save money. Although it is a long term savings, in which, initially the municipality may actually see a temporary cost increase before the savings are felt. This makes it difficult for an elected official to accept, since many of them only look as far forward as their next election. We have many locals in the state currently facing this issue. In the Sixth District, the cities of Royal Oak, Madison Heights, Ferndale and Hazel Park have a committee formed and are attempting to make consolidation into a fire authority a reality. Small fire authorities have been formed in the past, although it has yet to happen with any larger cities having fire departments represented by labor groups. In the event they are successful, many other municipalities are in the wings awaiting the outcome and will attempt to do the same. Understand that when forming a fire authority, we ultimately need to insure that all our rights as public employees are maintained and a fair and equitable contract for all is negotiated. This takes a lot of patience and cooperation from everyone involved.

*Continued on next page...*

## New Presidents

Two locals in the Sixth District elected new Presidents this year. Bruce Whiteside was elected president of Waterford Local 1335 and Pat Sheehan elected president of Ferndale Local 812. I would like to thank Gene Butcher and Brian Batten for their service as local presidents and hope they enjoy their newly found free time.

## Arbitration Awards

Pontiac Local 376 recently received a very unfavorable arbitration award in reference to their 4 man engines. The City of Pontiac reduced engine manning from 4 to 3 which resulted in a grievance and ultimately arbitration. In what was believed to be a fairly safe arbitration with a historically favorable arbitrator, the arbitrator overturned 30 years of past practice and a previous arbitrator's award maintaining 4 man engine companies. The arbitrator awarded the City the right to set the staffing levels of the engine companies. The arbitrator's definition of a past practice is deplorable and makes it almost impossible to prove that a past practice exists. He also overturned the previous arbitrator's award, citing the fact that the fire department does not respond to as many fires as they did at the time of the previous arbitration. The complete award is posted on the MPFFU web site; please take some time and read it. This is the reality of what we face today.

Take care, be safe and have a great summer.

Mountain Lake Golf Course		
		
5750 Opal Lake Rd. Gaylord, MI 49735 989.731.1300		
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<b>Spring &amp; Fall</b>		
April & October		\$25.00
May & September		\$35.00
Replay \$20.00		

## Secretary-Treasurer... from page 5

outlook on life. If you haven't heard Dr. Blum speak before you can't afford not to attend this seminar. If you have already heard his presentation, I am certain you will want to attend again!

In addition, one of the most popular speakers in the fire service today, **Chief Billy**

# Safety & Health

By Aileen Ciesla (Saginaw Local 102)

According to the March 2007 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, a Harvard study revealed that the chances of firefighters dying from heart problems while battling a house fire were **100** times greater than during routine downtime!! Another frightening statistic reveals that approximately 100 firefighters die in the line of duty each year, with nearly half of these deaths attributed directly to heart disease!!

These types of dismal statistics prompted the IAFF and the IAFC to join forces and form the Wellness-Fitness Initiative; ultimately to improve firefighter health, wellness, and fitness. To successfully implement this program, firefighters were needed to take the lead and the IAFF Peer Fitness Trainer program was born. These Peer Fitness Trainers would contribute to their perspective fire departments in several ways: by educating fellow members about the benefits of wellness and fitness, by performing annual fitness assessments, by evaluating and selecting fitness equipment, and by designing individual fitness programs for fellow firefighters.

Currently, there are over 3,000 IAFF Peer Fitness Trainers nationwide. The trend is slowly growing in Michigan with Peer Fitness Trainers found in the following locals:

Clinton Township, Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Midland, Saginaw, West Bloomfield Township, Independence Township, Port Huron, and Sterling Heights.

Most of these departments follow the IAFF guidelines for the Peer Fitness Trainer program, providing mandatory, non-puni-

tive programs. Several locals have received fitness programs via grants or by selling older, out-dated equipment. Many locals have taught classes in a variety of subjects including: injury prevention, dehydration, basic nutrition, and strength conditioning.

Peer Fitness Trainers have been creative in motivating their members; providing fitness competitions (with incentives) among shifts, etc. In Saginaw, Peer Fitness Trainers held a holiday competition modeled after the popular tv show "The Biggest Loser". Prior to Thanksgiving, each participant was weighed, measured, and had their body fat tested. After New Year's Day, each participant was measured once again. Whichever shift and individual lost the most (combined) weight/body fat won the title of "The Biggest Losers". The winning shift won workout t-shirts and lunch provided by the Chief. The winning individual overall won a "Biggest Loser" t-shirt and \$25.00 cash. It was a great way to maintain or lose weight over the holidays while promoting camaraderie and friendly competition among the shifts.

The Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union already has a powerful networking program established. MPFFU Peer Fitness Trainers would like to extend this networking potential as a means of assisting members further, both on and off the fireground.

Many firefighters have lofty dreams of retirement. MPFFU Peer Fitness Trainers want them to maintain their health and fitness during their careers so they are able to fulfill these dreams of retirement. We owe it to ourselves, to our families, and to our communities to maintain a healthy lifestyle and enjoy life both on and off the job!!

**Goldfeder** will attend. Chief Goldfeder will speak about *Firefighter Safety and Survival and Getting Everyone Home!* He has served on several NFPA and IAFC Committees. He is the Vice Chairman of the IAFC Safety, Health, and Survival Section, is a member of the National Firefighter Near-Miss Reporting Task Force (IAFC), and has been an Instructor at

the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) for the past 24 years as well as a member of the FDIC Advisory Board for the past 14 years.

This seminar is open to all MPFFU members and their guests. Complete registration information will be posted on the MPFFU website ([www.mpffu.org](http://www.mpffu.org)) in the very near future.

## Memorial Rig

One of the most widely practiced and emotionally healing firefighter traditions is the firefighter funeral. When we are called upon to bury a brother or sister that has made the supreme sacrifice the ceremony is not so much for the fallen as it is for the living.

Picture if you can, a young wife, proud of her husband the firefighter, but also a bit apprehensive about his love of the job. He has already stopped giving her the details about runs. She only gets upset with him for foolish bravado, later she might relate the story to friends with pride. It goes without saying that the department will always be a part of their marriage. At best she will have to deal with a multitude of job-related injuries. No swimming in the lake during a camping trip because the burns on the neck might get infected.

The worst case scenario is hearing the news about a critically injured firefighter with the name being withheld. She may call the firehouse immediately or wait in front of the TV for any additional info. She begins to pray that the phone doesn't ring. When it does, she answers only after taking a deep breath. This call's a salesperson; or maybe a friend calling looking for the scoop after hearing the news on the radio. The phone rings again, she answers ready for another sales pitch. Instead she drops the phone...

*"Why won't the baby stop crying? Why was he working today anyway? He wasn't even supposed to be there. Why won't the phone stop ringing? Stop it! Stop it! My God - Stop it!"*

Suddenly, she is surrounded by the well-meaning. Funeral arrangements must be made and the baby needs a diaper. Fear gives way to anger.

*"Why did he go in there? Mr. Bigshot the invincible fireman. I hate that he was a firefighter. What about us, Mr. Fireman?"*

Of course, she keeps all of these things inside. On the outside she is polite and tries desperately to maintain her composure, underneath she is seething.

Then on the day of the funeral she understands. After seeing her husband make the final run on the back of a fire engine, surrounded by a sea of blue, she understands. And the anger is replaced with pride.

If you have read this far there is nothing more for me to say as I would be preaching to the choir. The use of a pumper as a caisson will continue for years with the completion of the Memorial Rig. If you would like to help or want more information contact Sgt. Arn Nowicki of the Detroit Firemen's Fund at [ArnieDFD@aol.com](mailto:ArnieDFD@aol.com).



We can fix this!



The new aluminum skeleton



Progress!!!



New Freightliner Chassis



Pump test At R & R in Northville Twp.

# 2007 Federation of State and Provincial Firefighters Meeting

Portsmouth, NH  
May 10-11, 2007

Several 2008 Presidential candidates visited and spoke to a small gathering of IAFF State Presidents and Secretary-Treasurers in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on May 10-11, 2007. In attendance were: US Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), US Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Former US Senator John Edwards (D-NC), US Senator Joe Biden (D-DE), and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. Although he was unable to attend, US Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) spoke to the crowd via a conference call. Each candidate explained why they wanted to be President of the United States and why they want the support of union firefighters. MPFFU President Paul Hufnagel and others directed several questions to each of the candidates. Visit the IAFF website ([www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org)) to see videos of several Presidential candidates addressing IAFF members at the IAFF Legislative Conference in March.



## Did you know that MPFFU members could save up to \$327.96 or more a year on auto insurance?



You may already know that members of the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union can get a special group discount on auto insurance through Liberty Mutual's Group Savings Plus® program.\* But did you know that Group Savings Plus offers many *other* discounts on both auto and home insurance? In fact, you could save hundreds of dollars a year on auto insurance alone. And you could save even more by insuring your home as well.

To learn more about all the valuable savings and benefits available through Group Savings Plus, call today.

**Contact Jim Hillman at 1-800-230-9302 x205.**

[James.Hillman@LibertyMutual.com](mailto:James.Hillman@LibertyMutual.com) [www.libertymutual.com/lm/jameshillman](http://www.libertymutual.com/lm/jameshillman)

Please mention group #3216.

\*Discounts and credits are available where state laws and regulations allow, and may vary by state. Certain discounts apply to specific coverages only. To the extent permitted by law, applicants are individually underwritten; not all applicants may qualify. \*\*Figure based on a March 2007 sample of auto policyholder savings when comparing their former premium with those of Liberty Mutual's group auto and home program. Individual premiums and savings will vary. Coverage provided and underwritten by Liberty Mutual Insurance Company and its affiliates, 175 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA. A consumer report from a consumer reporting agency and/or a motor vehicle report, on all drivers listed on your policy, may be obtained where state laws and regulations allow. ©2007 Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. All Rights Reserved.



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