

AROUND THE STATE: FSAs RESPOND TO PATIENT ASSAULT; JCS COs ASSAULTED BY DRUNK INMATE

Forensic Security Assistants (FSAs) at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry intervened in a violent patient-on-patient assault Jan. 3.

One patient hit another with a chair and then bit off a piece of his lip. The assaulted patient was sent out for medical care. The aggressor has attacked other patients and staff in the past, an FSA said.

A diffusion meeting was held for the staff who responded.

FSAs have dangerous jobs, too, that require them to run toward danger instead of away from it. Thank you, FSAs, for your handling of this incident. Stay safe.

An inmate drunk on New Year's Eve assaulted four officers at Cooper Street and kicked a hole in a wall.

The Level I inmate was belligerent. Because all holding cells were full, officers took him to a strip search room. He was able to move his handcuffs to the front of his body, an officer said. He headbutted one CO and spit on another. Two other COs were also assaulted. One officer had a bloody nose, but no serious injuries were reported, an officer said.

The prisoner was drunk on spud juice.

COOPER STREET CO OPENS UP ABOUT SURVIVING COVID-19

A Cooper Street officer made a miraculous recovery from COVID-19 last month.

"I was OK, then it got worse. Next thing I remember, I woke up in the hospital and the ventilator was coming off," Jermaine Ross said.



Less than two months ago, Ross was a 40-year-old

father of two who loved to run and work out. He had a few pre-existing conditions but was managing them well through diet and exercise.

Then COVID hit Cooper Street. There were many cases in D-unit, where Ross was assigned. He was

sent on a hospital run Nov. 17 and was mandated to work 16 hours that day. Ross said he was exhausted at the end of day, but thought it was just from work. He took a routine COVID test the next day, and a couple of days later, received a positive result.

"I did everything right," Ross said. "Wore my mask, washed my hands, social distanced. And I still got it."

[Read the full story on our website.](#)

As of Jan. 14, [more than 3,000 MDOC staff](#) – about 25 percent – have contracted COVID-19. At least four staff have died. MCO leaders and staff thank all officers, FSAs, ARU investigators, and all members for their extraordinary sacrifices during this pandemic. Stay safe and well.

COVID-19 UPDATES

- A few weeks ago, we sent a [special message to members](#) summarizing MCO's advocacy for frontline staff throughout 2020 and our top priorities in the new year.

In the coming weeks, we'll be calling on members to assist union leadership in speaking out on the working conditions in the prisons and the Center for Forensic Psychiatry.

Watch your email and our website for more.

- If you have been forced to use your own leave time or go into lost time due to close contact or a positive COVID test, [please fill out this form](#) for the MCO Legal Department.

- There have been 3,237 COVID-19 cases confirmed among MDOC staff and 23,400 among inmates.

[MDOC posts the latest numbers \(broken down by facility\) here.](#)

Are you still waiting for your holiday mailing with the calendar book? The delay is mail-related. Additional books have been sent out to those members who have reported not getting the original shipment.

We have heard from a large number of members at SLF, STF, SRF, MRF, WCC, TCF and WHV who did not get their holiday packet. We have delivered extra calendar books to these chapter presidents with a list of who needs them. If you are at any of those locations and submitted an email for a new book, please contact your chapter president to get one.

If you are not at one of those facilities and still need a calendar book, email [Mikaela Bliven](#).

TELL GOV. WHITMER: WE'VE SACRIFICED ENOUGH – WE NEED OUR LEAVE TIME

This week, MCO launched a campaign asking Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to restore sick and annual leave to members who were forced to use this time for COVID-related absences.

Members, please take one minute to [email Gov. Whitmer now](#). If you're not a member but would like to support COs and FSAs by emailing the governor, [please use this form to send an email](#).

More than 950 emails have been sent to the governor since Tuesday. **We'd like to send 2,000 emails as soon as possible.** We know this is an ambitious goal, but here's why it's so important.

We must show Gov. Whitmer that there is wide agreement among COs, FSAs, ARU investigators, and all MCO members and their families on this point: **we earned our leave time and it's wrong to take it from us due to exposure to the virus at work.**

MCO leaders have been pushing this message for months. When 2,000 people reinforce the message, it proves our solidarity and determination to fight for what's right. Please take one minute to send an email now.

MCO leaders and staff are planning more actions to spread awareness of working conditions and advocate for fairness during the pandemic. We'll keep you updated.

CONVALESCENT PLASMA QUESTIONS ANSWERED

As of Jan. 28, there have been [3,441 COVID-19 cases](#) among MDOC staff. Many officers have inquired about how they can donate convalescent plasma in hopes of helping those with severe cases.

[Versiti.org](#) has a full list of where you can donate convalescent plasma in Michigan. You may also ask your local blood center if there are options to donate convalescent plasma in your area.

Those who are interested in donating can visit [Versiti.org](#) for more information or sign up with [American Red Cross](#). Those with questions may contact Michigan Versiti Blood Center of Michigan at (866) 642-5663 or the [Red Cross](#).

Convalescent plasma has antibodies that can help COVID-19 patients by giving their immune system a boost. If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or suspect that you have had the virus, you may be eligible to donate.

- Report by Mikaela Bliven

This story was edited for space. [Read full details on our website.](#)

Gun Tower Coffee supports Michigan COs

Have you tried Gun Tower Coffee? A retired Michigan corrections officer started this new coffee company with COs in mind. Plus, 10% of net profits go to groups that support COs, like the MCO Crisis Fund!

The retiree got the idea from his son, who is a firefighter. Firefighters drink a special brand of coffee that donates some profits to firefighters' crisis funds.

"My son said, 'Dad, why don't you do a coffee company for corrections officers?'"

Gun Tower Coffee offers a medium and dark roast in 1 lb. bags and 12-cup packets. Because manifesting can be an issue when bringing in coffee, the packaging is clear plastic.

When you buy Gun Tower Coffee, 10% of profits will be donated. Go to <https://guntowercoffee.com/>, and at checkout, select the option to give to the MCO Crisis Fund. You can also buy Gun Tower Coffee at More Purks in Ionia. Keep your eyes peeled – it may be available soon in other stores near Michigan prisons.



Confidential emotional support counseling is now available at no cost to people who call the state's COVID-19 hotline (1-888-535-6136).

The service is part of a [grant program](#) implemented by the MDHHS Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Administration (BHDDA) in partnership with the Michigan State Police.

Full details are on the [MCO website](#) and [Michigan.gov/StayWell](#).

AGAIN IN 2021, MCO OFFERS MEMBERS SEVERAL OPTIONS TO PAY FOR COLLEGE

Again this year, MCO is proud to offer four programs to reduce the cost of college for members and their families.

- Our **MCO Scholarship Program** will award 20 scholarships of \$750 each to children of MCO members who will be enrolled in college this fall. **Deadline: April 1.**

- The **Academy Assistance Program** will disperse 20 awards of \$500 each to current MCO members who paid out of pocket or took on debt to get their corrections training at a community college in 2014 or 2015.

Switching to community colleges for training was a failed experiment, and MDOC returned to the paid academies in 2015. **Deadline: April 1.**

- The **Student Debt Assistance Program** will award 20 grants of \$500 each to current MCO members who have student loans from earning an undergraduate degree. **Deadline: April 1.**

- **Free Online Community College** for any dues-paying member or family of dues-paying members. It's offered through Eastern Gateway Community College in Ohio. The program is free online and includes all fees

and e-books. Get the credits you need for the training academy, earn your associate degree, or get a leg up on your bachelor's degree. **Deadline: Rolling, classes start every few months.**

We aren't offering a "one-size-fits-all" approach; instead, we are providing members and their families the reassurance of knowing there is assistance available from MCO, no matter what path they decide to take toward higher education.

Read complete details on all programs at mco-seiu.org/college-affordability. Good luck!

COVID-19 UPDATES: VARIANT FOUND AT IBC

- The new **COVID-19 variant** known as B.1.1.7 has been found at Bellamy Creek. Staff and inmates at IBC will now be tested daily for the virus, in accordance with a new [Executive Order](#) issued by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

- In light of this new variant, we'd like to remind members that if you test positive, you are entitled to file for **workers' compensation**. Here is how it works:

If you are off 7 days or less, you are not eligible to receive disability benefits. If you are off more than 7 days but less than 14, you are eligible for benefits only for any of the days past 7. For example, if you are off 10 days, you are eligible for benefits for the 8th, 9th and 10th day only. If you are off 14 days or more, then you are covered all the way back to day 1 and are eligible for restoration of 2/3 of your pay and leave.

Please contact The Law Offices of Charters, Tyler, Zack & Shearer, P. C. at (248) 321-4474 for assistance in filing for workers' comp.

- You can still **email the governor** to ask her to restore leave time used for COVID-19 quarantines or illness.

[Take one minute to email Gov. Whitmer now.](#) If you're not a member but would like to support COs and FSAs by emailing the governor, please [use this form to send an email.](#)

We earned our leave time and it's wrong to take it from us due to exposure to the virus at work. MCO leaders are exploring every option available to restore leave time used for COVID-19 absences.

Read more about this campaign in the [Jan. 29 KYI](#).

- There have been 3,540 cases of COVID-19 among MDOC staff and 24,919 among inmates. [MDOC posts the latest numbers \(broken down by facility\) here.](#)

BARAGA COs RECOVERING AFTER VICIOUS ASSAULT

Two Baraga officers were assaulted Wednesday by an inmate with a razor blade.

An officer was opening the laundry room door when a prisoner ambushed him from behind and deliberately tried to expose the officer's neck before slashing him multiple times. The second officer responded and was also slashed and punched in the face. Both of the assaulted officers were able to fight back and take control of the prisoner themselves.

They are recovering well.

Thank you, officers, for doing this important and dangerous job every day. Stay safe.



BULLETIN

FEB. 24, 2021

OFFICER VIKAS VIJ HONORED AS 2021 MDOC OFFICER OF THE YEAR



Vikas Vij, a corrections officer at Thumb Correctional Facility, has been named the 2021 Michi-

gan Department of Corrections Officer of the Year.

Officer Vij is known for his positivity and his interpersonal skills. In his nine years with MDOC, he has worked at three facilities and as a Field Training Officer at the Training Academy.

He has proven to be an asset to the safety and security of his facility. For example, he once stopped a visitor from bringing \$1,200 cash and a lighter into Thumb. He has received the Warden's Coin more than once for finding contraband, he said.

CO Vij immigrated to the United States from India in 1995 when he was 8 years old. He is the first person in his family to earn a bachelor's degree or to choose a career in public service, he said.

"I love being a corrections officer," Vij said.

He holds a political science degree from Oakland University, where he volunteered translating documents to Hindi.

CO Vij has also helped raise thousands of dollars for Special Olympics and volunteers with WATCH D.O.G.S at his child's school.

Ray Sholtz, who represents corrections officers on the Officer of the Year selection committee and is the Chief of

Staff at Michigan Corrections Organization, said all the finalists for the award this year were phenomenal.

"Congratulations to CO Vij and the finalists for MDOC Officer of the Year," Sholtz said. "Officer Vij had a great application and an excellent interview."

Finalists for Officer of the Year: Jeffrey Vining, MBP

Officer Vining keeps his head and shows professionalism in stressful situations.

For example, he acted fast to stop an 11-man yard fight on the Level V yard last fall.

"His quick reaction to this very serious situation reaffirmed his dedication to protecting others," his nominating committee said.

Vining has 19 years with the MDOC. In 2018, he received the department's lifesaving award for rescuing two kayakers. He is also a U.S. Air Force veteran. He and his wife have two children.

Derek Wright, SMT

Officer Wright is dedicated to training. He assists with officers' annual PA 415 training, including Prisoner Management and Emergency Health Care, and he teaches several inmate classes, including Cage Your Rage and Thinking for a Change.

CO Wright has been with the MDOC for 24 years. He also helps fundraise for the American Cancer Society.

He and his wife have five children.

Robert Halvorsen, NCF

Officer Halvorsen has been respon-

sible for making sure special cleaning tasks are carried out to stop the spread of COVID-19. He has also ensured donning and doffing stations were cleaned and stocked.

"It is these efforts that helped to bring NCF out of an outbreak status," his nominating committee said.

CO Halvorsen previously worked at Ojibway and downstate facilities. He has 26 years with the MDOC. At Newberry, he's become known as the go-to person for his can-do attitude, sound judgment, and attention to detail.

He and his wife have two adult children.

Daren Ferden, ARU

Investigator Ferden is known for his friendliness and ability to bring people together.

He was instrumental in the smooth operation of Green Oaks Correctional Center, the prison opened temporarily to house inmates with COVID-19.

"Daren quickly gathered the less experienced staff and began to mentor them..." his nominating committee wrote. "The staff worked together as if they had known each other for years and had become a small family. Daren was a pinnacle in this formula that helped create its stability."

Inv. Ferden has been part of the MDOC for 22 years. He was an officer at RGC before becoming a transportation officer and then an ARU investigator.

He has two children.

Congratulations to all Officers of the Year! [Read a list of all facility COs of the year on our website.](#)

GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET INCLUDES INCREASED FUNDING FOR EMPLOYEE WELLNESS, TRAINING ACADEMY

Governor Whitmer released her Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposal in mid-February. While incoming revenues were stronger than predicted, providing more general fund dollars than the administration thought they would have initially, long term structural budget challenges remain.

However, with negotiations in Washington D.C. heating up, it is possible that Michigan could receive additional federal funding to fill the gaps. If the U.S. Senate does not reduce the state and local relief funding outlined in the COVID-19 relief bill passed by the House, Michigan would receive approximately \$5.7 billion to help address the impact of COVID-19 on the state. These funds would also have less restrictions placed on them than previous federal COVID-19 funding, allowing the state to address a wider range of economic issues.

The governor's recommended overall FY 2022 MDOC budget is approximately \$2 billion and features changes to funding for training new custody staff and employee wellness. The governor's recommendation provides an additional \$809,400 in funding for employee well-

ness programs, increasing the overall funding to \$2 million.

The recommendation addresses training new custody staff by outlining overall spending of approximately \$21.1 million to train around 800 new custody staff. However, the recommendation decreases baseline funding for training new custody staff from the previous \$9.5 million to \$7.4 million, a difference of around 80 new officers. This is a trend that would likely be continued throughout future budgets, with no commitment to consistently boost funding with one-time spending fixes. Officer staffing levels are dangerously low, and the state loses about 50 officers a month. The state currently has a vacancy of 665 officers.

State Senate and House appropriations subcommittees are now working to develop and finalize their version of the budget.

MCO officials have had several initial meetings with lawmakers to discuss the budget recommendations as well as COVID-19 relief. We will continue to keep you updated as this budget process continues.

- Story by Jonovan Luckey

MI STAY WELL OFFERS RESOURCES FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

Join [Michigan Stay Well](#) for "Uplifting our First Responders and Frontline Workers," a free, 1-hour webinar designed for frontline and emergency response employees.

The webinar will consist of a presentation followed by an interactive discussion.

This event is Tuesday, March 9 at 3 p.m. [Go to our website](#) for registration information.

Stay Well is also offering virtual sup-

port groups for frontline workers every Thursday this month. More details and sign up information are on our [website](#).

Michigan Stay Well is a federally-funded program implemented by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Administration (BHDDA) in partnership with the Michigan State Police.

- Story provided by Stay Well.

MBP CO STABBED AFTER TAKING CONTRABAND TV

A Marquette officer is recovering after an inmate stabbed her.

The assault happened Saturday as the officer was releasing Level V prisoners for yard. When she opened his cell door, he began stabbing her on her head and face with a sharpened weapon and punching her. She defended herself and tried to gain control of him. Her partners heard the commotion and responded to the gallery she was on to restrain the prisoner.

She was transported to the hospital for treatment of lacerations on her head and face, then released later that evening.

The officer had taken a contraband TV from this inmate.

Please keep an eye on each other while making rounds and during movement. Great job by her partners to get to her as quickly as possible and regain control.

SCHOLARSHIP REMINDER!

Don't forget, applications for the MCO Scholarship, Academy Assistance, or Student Debt Assistance must be postmarked by April 1. This deadline is earlier than in previous years.

- [MCO Scholarship Program](#).

Deadline: April 1.

- [Academy Assistance Program](#).

Deadline: April 1.

- The [Student Debt Assistance Program](#). Deadline: April 1.

• MCO also offers [free online community college](#). Deadline: rolling (classes start every few months).

Good luck!



MARCH 19, 2021

THE FORGOTTEN FRONTLINE: ESSENTIAL STAFF DESERVE ESSENTIAL RESPECT!

Email your legislators now to tell them we need premium pay, PPE, and more staff

Corrections officers and forensic security assistants have been on the frontlines during this pandemic, risking our lives. We need more staff, medical-grade PPE, and premium pay immediately.

If you agree, [please send an email to your Michigan state senator and representative now.](#)

Not a CO or FSA? [Family members, retirees, and other supporters may use this form](#) to email their legislators.

States like Michigan will be receiving federal relief money soon, and one of the possible uses of this funding is premium pay for essential staff. That's why we need all members to email their legislator now to ask them to set aside some funding for premium pay. After all, we've been risking our lives on the frontlines of COVID-19 for a full year.

Since launching this email campaign Tuesday, more than 1,000 emails have

been sent. This is a great start, but we need more people to step up and send the email. MCO leaders and staff have been advocating for premium pay, PPE, and more staff since the pandemic began, and we've had some successes. Our advocacy is strengthened when hundreds or thousands of our members back up our message with a quick email. It takes less than one minute – [please send an email now.](#)

AROUND THE STATE: SEVERAL ASSAULTS ON STAFF AT MARQUETTE, FORENSIC CENTER, SAGINAW

There have been four serious assaults on staff at MBP in the last three weeks.

The most recent was March 12 when prisoners jumped an officer and a lieutenant during yard. The officer had a fractured nose and hand. Both staff members were treated at a hospital and released. This assault may have been retaliation for a shakedown by the Emergency Response Team the previous day.

On March 7, an officer was assaulted by a Level V prisoner while he was conducting a cell shakedown. After being directed to exit the cell and report to the base, the prisoner came back to the cell and confronted the officer. When the officer picked up some contraband to remove it from the cell, the prisoner grabbed the officer's hand and then began punching him. The officer fought back and eventually pinned the prisoner down until assistance arrived. The officer went to a hospital and was released.

A few days before that, an inmate assaulted a counselor by reaching through his cell bars and trying to stab him. He was treated at a hospital and

released.

The first assault was Feb. 27. An officer was punched and stabbed with a sharpened weapon. See the [March 5 KYI](#) for more details.

Forensic security assistants (FSAs) have dealt with a rash of assaults by patients in the last month at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry.

In mid-February, an FSA suffered a foot fracture while trying to restrain a patient. About a week later, a patient punched an FSA while being restrained.

Then on March 18, an FSA was hit in the face and another was spit on.

An intoxicated prisoner assaulted two SRF officers earlier this week.

They have been treated at a hospital and released.

These stories are a stark reminder that corrections officers and forensic security assistants have dangerous jobs. Watch your back, watch your partner's back, and stay safe.

IN MEMORIAM: OFFICER RENO AND OFFICER FOX

Officer Marcell Reno of WHV passed away March 13.

Reno started with the MDOC in 2000.

His survivors include his daughter, father, brother, other family, friends, and coworkers.

A funeral service was Thursday.

Officer Douglas Fox, who worked at DRC, died March 15.

Fox had worked with the MDOC for more than 25 years.

Information on visitation and a memorial service is [here](#).

Please join us in wishing for peace for the family and friends of both of these officers. Rest in peace, CO Reno and CO Fox.

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APRIL 2, 2021

WE NEED YOUR THOUGHTS: TAKE THE 2021 BARGAINING SURVEY NOW

MCO and the Office of the State Employer are preparing for contract negotiations which will take place this summer and fall. The MCO Executive Board, which also serves as the bargaining team, would like members' input before negotiations begin.

A link to the survey is on our [website](#) and [Facebook group](#). Please note, you cannot save your work and return to the survey later.

The survey will request identifying information from you so your membership status can be verified. However,

your responses will not be associated with your identity.

Since we released the survey March 23, more than 20% of dues-paying members have completed it. If you have taken the survey, thank you! Email any questions to mail@mco-seiu.org.

COVID-19 UPDATES: ARBITRATION COMING UP ON FORCED USE OF LEAVE TIME

Mandate lists at 10 facilities returned to 50% as of March 29. The facilities are WCC, MRF, TCF, KCF, NCF, JCS, SLF, SRF, STF, and ECF.

At the onset of the pandemic, MDOC administration made the mandate lists extend to 100% of the seniority list. MCO leaders have been asking MDOC administration to return to 50% at facilities where staffing numbers allow and COVID-related absences are low. We are pleased the MDOC administration agreed to evaluate facilities on an individual basis rather than state-wide.

There is still potential for further pandemic issues or rashes of officer shortages that could result in a need to keep a facility at 100% to avoid excessive mandates to our members on the bottom half of the list. Keeping the 50% mandate lists is a top priority, but it can't override the health and safety of our brothers and sisters.

Read more about this change in our [members-only Facebook group](#).

Restoring sick and annual leave to members who were forced to use it for employer-mandated quarantines is MCO's top priority, and we are scheduled for arbitration on this issue April 14. We'll keep you posted.

We'd like to remind members who contract the virus to file for workers' compensation. Here is how it works:

If you are off 7 days or less, you are not eligible to receive disability benefits. If you are off more than 7 days but less than 14, you are eligible for benefits only for any of the days past 7. For example, if you are off 10 days, you are eligible for benefits for the 8th, 9th and 10th days only. If you are off 14 days or more, then you are covered all the way back to day 1 and are eligible for restoration of 2/3 of your pay and leave.

Please contact The Law Offices of Charters, Tyler, Zack & Shearer, P. C. at (248) 321-4474 for assistance in filing for workers' comp.



It was one year ago this week that CTO Damon Burton passed away. He was the first MDOC staff member and first MCO member to

die from COVID-19. ARF Officer Randy Rumler and IBC Officer Ramiro Mata also died of COVID-19, along with two other MDOC staff members.

Burton had been with the MDOC

for more than 30 years. He was well-known among Detroit-area members and had a reputation of being professional and friendly.

Rumler started with the MDOC in 1996 and had spent his entire career at Gus Harrison. He was also a U.S. Army veteran.

Mata worked at Bellamy Creek for more than 18 years. He left behind four children and a large extended family.

A year ago, no one could have known that we'd still be dealing with COVID today. Or that more than 30% of MDOC staff would contract the virus and five MDOC staff would die. This virus has had a profound effect on our health, our families, and our communities.

MCO has been a tireless advocate for members throughout this pandemic. A summary of COVID-related actions we took in 2020 is [on our website](#). We have asked members to take action themselves to support leaders' efforts, like by [emailing the governor](#) and their [legislators](#).

Thank you, members, for the sacrifices you are making every day. Leaders and staff understand all that's being asked of you in this critical moment and appreciate your sacrifices.

EARN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE FOR FREE!

MCO's free college program expanded to include four bachelor's degree paths



We are proud to announce that now MCO members and families can earn a bachelor's degree online completely free – you don't pay for tuition, fees, or books!

The free bachelor's program is offered through Central State University in Ohio. You can earn a bachelor's in Education, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, or Interdisciplinary Studies. [Read more on the bachelor's degrees you can earn for free.](#) Additional majors may be added in the future.

MCO does not pay for the free college programs. They are offered by Central State University (CSU) and Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC).

Here's how the EGCC and CSU free college programs work:

The colleges will pay for any remaining tuition, fees, and e-books for certain degree paths after you receive federal or state student aid.

To get started, you must create an account with [SEIU Member Benefits](#). You must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), submit any documentation the FAFSA requires, and claim any award offered.

More detailed info is on the [SEIU](#)

[Member Benefits website](#) and this [FAQ page](#).

Other important info:

- MCO does not pay for this benefit. The benefit works as a "last-dollar scholarship," or grant, through CSU, that is intended to fill the gap between any federal, state or employer education grants you receive and the cost of tuition, fees and e-books for certain online degree programs at CSU.

- CSU is a fully-accredited college. Any credits you earn are eligible for transfer. Any college you later transfer to will make a final determination as to whether they will accept the credits.

- To enroll at CSU, you must have a high school diploma (or GED) and an associate's degree or 60 credit hours with a GPA of 2.2. (Don't have an associate's or the credits? Start with [free online community college](#).)

- This benefit is available to dues-paying MCO members and their immediate family members (spouse, children, step-children, grandchildren, and financial dependents). It is also available to [retiree members and their families](#). **Under no circumstances will free tuition be extended to union drop outs or other non-members.** (Keep in mind that [you must reauthorize your union membership](#) before October to continue to be an MCO member in good standing.)

A strong union can help members and their families with the things that matter most, as this free program illustrates. Thank you, members, for your commitment to MCO.

IN MEMORIAM: FSA CHRIS MOORE



Forensic Security Assistant Chris Moore passed away April 16.

Moore had worked at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry for more than 20 years. Outside of work, he enjoyed hunting, cooking, and spending time with his children.

Visitation and funeral service information is [available here](#). Rest in peace, FSA Moore.

Pistons ticket specials available now

Calling all Detroit Pistons fans! As an MCO member, you can get discount tickets to [games in April and May](#).

If you'd like to get tickets, please contact Member Support Specialist [Mikaela Bliven](#) for the discount code. Your membership status will be verified; only dues-paying members will be given codes for this or any MCO discount.

Check out all of our discounts on [our website](#). Enjoy!



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HONORING CORRECTIONS OFFICERS' SACRIFICES DURING CO WEEK AND EVERY WEEK

May 2-8 is Correctional Officers Week!

Thank you, officers, for keeping prisons and communities safe and secure. As front line staff behind the walls, officers put their personal safety on the line for public safety. We truly believe corrections officers have Michigan's toughest job.

MCO has obtained a proclamation from the governor recognizing Correctional Officers Week every year for 40 years. Even when other proclamations were put on hold last year due to the pandemic, we were able to secure this important recognition.

To say these are difficult times would be an understatement. MCO leaders and staff understand all that's being asked of corrections officers in this critical moment. You're putting your personal health on the line, distancing yourselves from family, and working a massive amount of over-

time. Leaders and staff can't thank you enough for meeting the challenges of this time with professionalism.

Stay safe and well.



[Read the CO Week proclamation on our website.](#)

IN MEMORIAM: FSA JEFF NIXON



Forensic Security Assistant Jeffery Nixon passed away unexpectedly May 2.

FSA Nixon had a 25-year career with the state of Michigan. He was known for his upbeat attitude and for putting people in a good mood. He loved sports and was an MSU fan.

[Information on services is here.](#)

Rest in peace, FSA Nixon.

APPLY FOR THE SENIORITY-BASED TRANSFER LIST NOW

May is the window period to apply for the Seniority-Based Transfer List, which is open to employees who meet the conditions as laid out in [DOM 2019-33](#), starting on page 5.

The window period to apply is May 1 - May 31 for transfers between July 1 and Dec. 31.

Contact your personnel office to complete the necessary paperwork. See the [DOM](#) for more info on how Seniority-Based transfers and other types of transfers work.

Join us at the Crisis Fund Golf Outing Sept. 10

Again this year, MCO is proud to host a golf outing to support the MCO Crisis Fund.

Even if you don't golf, you can help. Sponsorships are available starting at \$25.

The [Crisis Fund](#) assists dues-paying members grappling with a disaster, such as an on-the-job injury, sudden illness, or other devastating event.

MCO Crisis Fund Golf Outing

WHEN: Friday, Sept. 10. Registration starts at 8:15 a.m. Shotgun start at 9 a.m.

WHERE: Ledge Meadows Golf Course, 1801 Grand Ledge Highway, Grand Ledge, MI

COST: \$70 for 18 holes with lunch.

SIGN UP: [Get a form](#) you can print and fill out on our website. Mail the form and check to MCO Crisis Fund, 421 W. Kalamazoo, Lansing, MI 48933

TO SPONSOR OR GET MORE INFO: The [pamphlet on our website](#) includes a sponsor sign up form. Please print it, fill it out and mail with a check to MCO Crisis Fund. If you have questions, please call MCO at (517)485-3310.



COVID-19 UPDATES: LOU GIVES MEMBERS 8 HRS S/L

MCO has signed a Letter of Understanding with the state that will grant all MCO bargaining unit members 8 hours of sick leave as an incentive to use it to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine. Members are not required to get the vaccine; this is just an effort by the state to encourage people to get it. There is no expiration or revocation of the leave even if you choose not to get vaccinated.

[Read the LOU here.](#)

The MCO statewide grievance on the forced use of sick and annual leave and any related lost time for precautionary quarantines has now moved to the arbitration phase. The arbitrator heard arguments from MCO and the Depart-

ment and now both sides are preparing final written briefs to submit to the arbitrator, who will then make a ruling.

This grievance is one of two avenues that we are using to try to get this leave back for members. The other is our ongoing push to get the legislature and governor's office to approve use of federal funding to supplement the state budget and restore the time. We have secured proposed intent language for this supplement and are hopeful that the funding is approved. We'll keep you updated.

We've been working on both avenues for many months now. Both the grievance and legislative processes work slowly, but MCO leaders want members to know we are still fighting.

MI STAY WELL OFFERS MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Reminder: Confidential emotional support counseling is available at no cost at the state's COVID-19 hotline (1-888-535-6136).

The service is part of [Stay Well](#), a federally-funded program implemented by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Administration (BHDDA) in partnership with the Michigan State Police.

Stay Well is also offering "Up-lifting our First Responders and Frontline Workers," a free, one-hour webinar designed for those working on the frontlines of COVID-19. The next webinar will be held on May 27, with additional webinars every Thursday in June. [Register here.](#)

You can also reach the MDOC Wellness Unit at 833-322-9355 or email mdoc-wellness@michigan.gov.

BARAGA OFFICERS RESPOND TO PRISONER STABBING

A Baraga inmate used a piece of sharpened metal from a typewriter to stab another prisoner May 8.

Officers responded quickly to the assault, which happened in the Unit 7 (Level V) shower area. The prisoner

had been stabbed several times.

The assaulted prisoner was treated at the facility. The attacker went to segregation.

No staff injuries were reported.

STAND WITH MCO: REAUTHORIZE YOUR DUES TODAY

Members, you can reauthorize your membership dues now for the '21-'22 fiscal year.



Log in to the HR Self-Service Online Portal from a [desktop computer](#) or from a [mobile device](#) to get started. Full instructions are in [this flyer](#) and [video](#).

Or, you can call the HR Service Center at 877-766-6447 and ask to reauthorize. Their hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you joined or rejoined MCO on Oct. 1, 2020 or later, you do not need to reauthorize dues at this time as your current activation of dues counts for the next fiscal year.

Remember, the Michigan Civil Service Commission ruled in July 2020 that all state employee union members must reauthorize their union dues deduction every year, or the deduction will automatically end. This was done in yet another attempt to defund state employee unions including MCO and silence your voice.

You can read more about the Commission's decision and other important info on reauthorization at mco-seiu.org/reauthorize.

Thanks for standing in solidarity with your fellow officers and FSAs in MCO.

OFFICERS AT THREE PRISONS ASSAULTED BY INMATES; MTU PRISONERS PROTEST COVID PROTOCOLS

A Carson City unit was locked down after a serious staff assault and tense inmate gathering.

An inmate in 900 unit (Level II) came the CO desk the morning of June 4 with several complaints, including the yard schedule and COVID protocols, officers said.

The prisoner punched one officer, then punched another CO who responded. When the prisoner ran down the stairs toward his cell, more than a dozen inmates gathered and refused to disperse. Some of them yelled threats against staff, officers said. One inmate wielded a broomstick. Responding staff arrived quickly and dispersed prisoners that were in the area.

The two assaulted officers and a sergeant were treated at a hospital and released.

A few days later, a CO spotted an inmate from 900 unit on the yard when his unit was supposed to be inside. The officer approached him, and the prisoner tried to take him down. Officers responded. Dozens of inmates came to the scene, but as additional staff showed up, they left. No staff were injured.

Three officers were assaulted in a housing unit at Kinross June 9.

A prisoner became uncooperative and shoved one officer, then punched another officer. As those

two officers were restraining that prisoner, another prisoner entered the area and pulled a third officer down from behind in an attempt to aid the other prisoner. Both prisoners were restrained and placed in segregation.

The three officers sustained minor injuries in the incident and are OK.

A Marquette officer was assaulted by a Level 5 prisoner in a housing unit June 10.

The prisoner was released to attend a callout. He approached the officer station and began throwing punches at the officer at the desk. The prisoner was restrained by responding officers.

The officer was treated for a concussion at the emergency room and released.

Approximately 50 Level 2 prisoners at MTU refused to return to their housing unit June 9 when the yard period ended.

They remained peaceful but voiced their objections to COVID protocol changes and conditions before finally returning to their unit without incident.

These recent staff assaults are a stark reminder of the dangers COs face. Watch your back, watch your partner's back, and stay safe.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR COPS DAY!

COPS Day at the Ionia Free Fair returns Wednesday, July 21!

Corrections officers and other law enforcement officers are welcome to come out and get free snacks, MCO gear, and discounted ride wristbands. The fun starts at 1 p.m. at the hospital center in the Administration Building. The fairgrounds are located at 317 South Dexter Street in Ionia.

See you there!



COVID-19 LEAVE TIME REMINDER

As reported in the [last KYI](#), MCO has asked an arbitrator to restore leave time for members who had to use it for department-mandated quarantines. We filed a final brief last week and are now waiting on a decision.

Although we have arbitrated this case, members should [continue to report to MCO](#) the forced use of leave time or lost time for quarantines.

If you test positive, you are eligible to file for workers' compensation benefits. [This KYI](#) explained how this works. Please contact The Law Offices of Charters, Tyler, Zack & Shearer, P.C. at (248) 321-4474 for assistance in filing for workers' comp.

UPDATE ON ARBITRATION REGARDING FORCED LEAVE TIME FOR QUARANTINES

MCO has received the ruling on the grievance arbitration for the forced use of leave time for precautionary quarantines for members that did not test positive for COVID-19 but were still forced off due to close contact or symptoms.

The arbitrator did not grant our request for restoration of all leave credits. He based his decision not to restore leave credits on the fact that even though the Department forced members to use leave, they did in fact pay the members for the leave that was used. He ruled that if the leave credits were to be restored, it would create a windfall for the members because they would be getting credits back that they had already been paid for.

He also ruled that granting administrative leave was not an option for him to consider because the Department's policy on administrative leave gives the MDOC sole discretion on whether to grant administrative leave

and the MDOC declined to do so.

The arbitrator did rule that the Department cannot continue to force members to use leave credits for precautionary quarantines. It is optional. We believe that the Department will simply take the position that you can use leave credits or take lost time and save your leave credits.

This grievance was one of the two avenues we are using to get leave time restored for members who were off due to close contact or symptoms. We are still working on the other avenue for securing the restoration of leave credits through legislative measures and will exhaust all options.

Remember, this arbitration just pertained to those who were forced to quarantine but did not test positive. Members who tested positive for COVID-19 are eligible for partial time restoration through workers' comp benefits. [More info on workers' comp is in this KYI.](#)

AROUND THE STATE: IBC COs ASSAULTED; JCF INMATE DIES AFTER STABBING

A Bellamy Creek prisoner punched two officers who were preparing to restrain him for having a weapon in his cell.

The assault happened June 23. The prisoner was restrained and placed in segregation. Both officers were treated at the hospital, one of which received several stitches.

A Cotton prisoner died after being stabbed in a fight June 11. Two staff members were injured that day while breaking up fights.

Multiple fights broke out in a Level 4 unit when prisoners were allowed out of their cells to get breakfast trays. Staff responded quickly and recovered weapons. The fights were gang related.

An officer, a sergeant, and two inmates were sent to the hospital. One of the prisoners died from his wounds. The staff members and the other prisoner were treated and released.

Thirteen Level 4 prisoners at Chipewa were involved in a fight June 23 that left several prisoners injured.

Several weapons were involved. No staff were injured.

Get your caffeine fix and support COs at the same time with Gun Tower Coffee



If you haven't tried [Gun Tower Coffee](#), what are you waiting for? It's

the only coffee company that gives back to corrections officers.

Proceeds support the MCO Crisis Fund, which helps members facing a catastrophe. Just make sure you select the MCO Crisis Fund as your charity of choice when you check out.

The coffee comes in clear plastic designed for easy manifesting.

Ionia folks can also purchase Gun Tower Coffee at More Purks, 1036 W. Lincoln Ave., Ionia.

The month of July is the open window period to apply for the seniority-based Gas Mask Exemption lists at each facility. Each shift has its own list, which is based on 10% of the shift and includes both seniority-based placements and medical accommodation placements. Requests must be sent via email to your local HR office and shift command.

CHAPTER ELECTIONS NOMINATION PERIOD OPEN NOW

Count day tentatively set for Oct. 1 for mail-in election

Chapter elections will be held by mail again this year, [like they were in 2019](#). If you'd like to run for chapter office, you must accept your nomination by Aug. 6.

Complete details on this year's election process are in [this letter](#).

Here's what you should know:

- According to the MCO bylaws, members who have been in good standing for at least two years are automatically nominated (see your union bulletin board for a posting with the language). To accept your nomination and get your name on your chapter's ballot, email nominations@mco-seiu.org by Aug. 6.

- Notice of the nomination period and a list of your chapter's election committee is posted on your union bulletin board. You can also [read the notice here](#).

- The election count day is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 1 at the MCO Central Office in Lansing. This time frame is being moved back from September to allow time for ballots to be mailed to members and returned.

- Article 19 of the [MCO Bylaws](#) govern how chapter officers are elected. Section 5(a) specifies that these elections may be conducted by mail at the discretion of the State Executive Board.

If you have recently moved, now is the time to update your home address to make sure you get a ballot when it's time to vote. [Update your contact information on our website](#) or call the MCO Central Office at (517)485-3310. If you have questions, please contact stephanie@mco-seiu.org.



Did you know MCO union **dues must be reauthorized every year?** This means if you

reauthorized last summer or early fall, you need to reauthorize again! [Learn how.](#)

Reminder: Crisis Fund Golf Outing Sept. 10

There are still several openings for teams at the Crisis Fund Golf Outing in Lansing. Get yours before they're gone! The cost is \$70 per player and includes a cart, 18 holes, free driving range, drinks, and lunch.

Even if you don't golf, you can help. Sponsorships are available starting at \$25.

To golf or sponsor, get a [pamphlet on our website](#).

The [Crisis Fund](#) assists dues-paying members grappling with a disaster, such as an on-the-job injury, sudden illness, or other devastating event.

DDC OFFICER RECUPERATING FROM ASSAULT

A detainee at the Detroit Detention Center punched a corrections officer in the face Monday night as he was being escorted to a cell.

The officer fell to the floor, but he stood up and called for help.

The detainee had been arrested for assaulting two police officers. DDC administration had not been made aware, an officer said.

The detainee was charged with

assault. The officer is recovering at home and has not returned to work.

At DDC, MDOC corrections officers staff the jail. DDC COs deal with detainees who, moments earlier, committed serious crimes, or are experiencing a mental health crisis. The dangers DDC staff face may be different than those of officers in prisons, but still serious. Please wish this CO a quick recovery.



Reminder: COPS Day at the Ionia Free Fair is Wednesday, July 21! Complete details are on our [Facebook page](#).

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2021 CONTRACT BARGAINING UNDER WAY NOW

MCO and the state of Michigan opened bargaining last week.

Representatives from the Office of the State Employer (OSE) and MDOC met with the MCO Executive Board, which serves as the bargaining team. MCO President Byron Osborn is leading negotiations for MCO.

The bargaining team reviewed the results from this spring's survey. About 25% of dues-paying members completed the survey.

Over the coming months, we



The MCO bargaining team sits across from representatives for the state. President Byron Osborn is at center, with MCO Legal Director Jeff Foldie at left and Vice President/Chief of Staff Ray Sholtz at right.

may send bargaining updates to dues-paying members only via text and personal (not work) email.

Go to our website to [update your home email address](#) and make sure we have your cell phone number. You can also join our members-only [Facebook group](#).

Thank you, members, for your support.



There's strength in numbers. Reauthorizing your union dues now shows our strength and solidarity at the bargaining table. Reauthorizing is easy and takes one minute. [Learn how.](#)

REMINDER: RUN FOR CHAPTER OFFICE NOW

The deadline to accept your nomination for chapter office is Friday, Aug. 6. To accept your nomination and get your name on your chapter's ballot, email nominations@mco-seiu.org by the deadline.

More details were in the [last KYI](#).

If you have recently moved, [update your home address](#) to make sure you get a ballot in August. Go to our website or call the MCO Central Office at (517)485-3310.

IN MEMORIAM: CO ALCORN AND CO KISSEL



Parnall Officer Mark Alcorn died July 27.

Alcorn was an officer for 25 years. He leaves behind a wife and two sons.

Services will be Aug. 3. [Details are here.](#)

Baraga Officer Ted Kissel passed away July 16.

Kissel had been with the MDOC since 2015. He was a US Army veteran.

Services were last week.

Please join us in wishing peace for the family, friends, and coworkers of these two officers. Rest in peace, Officer Alcorn and Officer Kissel.



ADAM EARLEY JOINS STAFF

Please join us in welcoming MCO's new Member Support Specialist, Adam Earley.

Adam is a former corrections

officer who will assist members with employment benefits, MCO discounts, joining MCO, reauthorizing dues, union engagement and more. He'll also help with MCO's presentations and engagement with new recruits.

"I want members to know they can call me for anything," Adam said. "I want them to know I'm here for them, and I'm an advocate for them."

Contact Adam Earley at adam@mco-seiu.org or 517-485-3310 ext. 152.

AROUND THE STATE: STAFF ASSAULTED BY PRISONERS AT MARQUETTE, MACOMB, AND THUMB

A Marquette prisoner assaulted two staff last week, the latest incidents in a string of attacks against staff at MBP.

On Aug. 2, he cornered a CO in the health care area and grabbed her arm, an officer said. She was able to defend herself, and officers responded.

On Aug. 5, he assaulted another staff member by pulling her arm through cell bars and twisting it.

Last month, a sergeant and an officer were punched July 12 while breaking up a large yard fight. The fight started with five prisoners, but as staff intervened, additional inmates got involved.

A prisoner assaulted an officer July 27 in housing unit 7 (Level IV) at Macomb. The assault spilled over into the lobby area behind the officers' station.

The assaulted officer attempted to secure the prisoner. An officer who witnessed the assault used her institutional hand-held radio to call for assistance. A nearby officer responded to the area to stop the assault and separated the prisoner from the officer, causing all three of them to fall to the floor. The officer who was being assaulted fell backward and hit his head on the floor, resulting in him losing consciousness. An ambulance escorted the officer to the hospital. The prisoner was taken to segregation.

The next day while staff were responding to an incident in the same unit, an inmate began to strike a responding officer in the head and face. An officer in training immediately intervened, placing the prisoner on the floor to stop the assault.

Officers responded and were able to secure the prisoner in restraints. The assaulted officer lost consciousness, and healthcare staff provided medical assistance until an ambulance arrived. The prisoner was taken to segregation.

A nurse at the Thumb is recovering after a prisoner stabbed her in the head with a pen July 28.

The inmate was upset about having to take medication, an officer said.

Prisoners in the waiting room intervened. A few nurses hit their Personal Protective Devices (PPD) and staff responded.

He was transferred to another facility.

These incidents illustrate the dangers corrections staff face everyday. Watch your back, watch your partner's back, and stay safe.



Important reauthorization facts

- You must reauthorize your union dues once a year or they will automatically stop.

- Reauthorizing takes one minute. It's easy to do through the HRMN online portal ([mobile](#) or [desktop](#) version) or by calling 877-766-6447 and asking to reauthorize dues deduction EC01.

- The HRMN online portal is closed for four days starting the Sunday after each payday. Since Thursday, Aug. 19 is payday, that means the portal will be closed Sunday, Aug. 22 through Wednesday, Aug. 25. **Why not reauthorize now before the portal closes again?**

- The Michigan Civil Service Commission decided to require annual reauthorization in a philosophical attack against unions. They have taken several steps in the last few years to silence the voices of state employees.

Read a [Reauthorization Facts flyer here](#) that goes into each of these points in more context, or a [full Q&A here](#). Remember, there's how-to guides and other info at mco-seiu.org/reauthorize.

****Wage scales through April 2022 are [on our website now](#).****

Because in 2018 we bargained wages and health care for one year, wage scales for 2020 through 2022 were not printed in the contract book. Please refer to them on our website.

Common reauthorization misunderstandings



We have been hearing from a few members who think they have reauthorized dues. Actually, they reauthorized last year.

You must have reauthorized on Oct. 1, 2020 or later, or else your dues will automatically stop this October.

We are also hearing from people who aren't aware that they already reauthorized and that no further action is needed for their dues to continue.

If you aren't sure if you have reauthorized for this year's deadline, log in to the [HRMN portal](#) to check ([use this link](#) if you're on a mobile device). Go to Menu at top left. Then under Bookmarks, select Pay, then select

Dues Payroll Deduction.

If you do not need to reauthorize at this time, under the heading Current Deductions, you'll see a message stating: "You currently have active dues deductions for the deduction code EC01: EMP ORG-MI CORR ORG (MBR). You have already reauthorized your dues for the upcoming fiscal year. This authorization is valid through 10/14/2022. You may return after October 1 to reauthorize again for an additional year." **If you do not see that message, you still need to reauthorize.**

If you need help, let us know. Email reauthorization@mco-seiu.org or call us at (517)485-3310. You can also read more info at mco-seiu.org/reauthorize.

AMF OFFICER UNINJURED AFTER ASSAULT ATTEMPT

A Baraga inmate threw punches at an officer, but he was able to block them and walk away with no injuries.

The attempted assault happened Aug. 13 on the unit five (Level V) yard.

An inmate walked up to a CO and began throwing punches, which the officer deflected. Staff were able to get the situation under control.

The inmate was moved to segregation.

MCO President Byron Osborn posted an update on bargaining, the staffing and mandates crisis, and more. This update was emailed to members Thursday. You can also read it in our [members-only Facebook group](#).

Sponsor or play in the 2021 Crisis Fund Golf Outing!

Don't forget, the Crisis Fund Golf Outing is Friday, Sept. 10. Sign up now while there's still time!

The event will be at Ledge Meadows Golf Course in Grand Ledge. Spots for four-person teams are available.

We are also looking for sponsors. Sponsorships start at just \$25.

The deadline to sponsor a tee or cart sign is Sept. 2. [Registration and sponsorship info is on our website.](#)

To reserve your spot, send in your registration with payment as soon as possible. See you there!



DON'T PITCH THAT MAIL! MCO CHAPTER ELECTION BALLOTS ARRIVING NOW

Chapter election ballots are being mailed now to dues-paying members eligible to vote at chapters that have a contested election. Watch your mailbox.

Ballots must be received at the address on the return envelope before Friday, Oct. 1. On the morning of Oct. 1, the ballots will be retrieved, and the count will begin. Any ballots returned after that time will not be counted.

If there is no contested race for any chapter office at your facility, you will not receive a ballot. Instead, those who nominated themselves will automatically take office Oct. 1. See your union bulletin board for more information.

As a reminder, you must be a dues-paying member for at least 180 days (as of count day) to vote, according to MCO bylaws. If you have not paid dues for 180 days, you will not receive a ballot. New recruits who join within 60 days of hire are eligible to vote immediately and will receive ballots.

If you have any questions, contact Stephanie Short at stephanie@mco-seiu.org.

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CRISIS FUND GUN RAFFLE TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Interested in buying tickets for this year's Crisis Fund Raffle? MCO chapter leaders have raffle tickets for sale now.

The top prize is \$1,000 cash. Other prizes include hunting rifles and a stay at Great Wolf Lodge. [See a full list of prizes.](#)

The drawing will be Oct. 20 in Lansing. You don't need to be present to win. Tickets are \$5 each or 3 for \$10. Get your tickets now – see your MCO chapter officials.

The Gun Raffle supports the MCO Crisis Fund, which helps members facing catastrophe. To those who support the fund, we thank you.

Reauthorization deadline is Saturday, Oct. 2!



If you have not yet reauthorized your dues, please note **the deadline to reauthorize is Saturday, Oct. 2.**

Dues will automatically stop for anyone who has not reauthorized by that date. If your dues stop, that means you will lose all benefits of membership as well, like [free college](#) and the right to vote on the contract and in chapter elections.

Please don't wait until the last minute – reauthorization is too important. We don't want to risk

anyone putting this off and then forgetting the deadline in a few weeks.

Reauthorize now in the [HRMN portal](#) (use [this link](#) from a mobile device). Or you can call the MI-HR Service Center at 877-766-6447 and ask to reauthorize dues deduction EC01. If you need help, email reauthorization@mco-seiu.org or call us at (517)485-3310. You can also read more info at mco-seiu.org/reauthorize.

Thanks, members, for standing together in MCO.

RETURN YOUR CHAPTER BALLOT BEFORE OCT. 1

Make sure your vote is counted – mail your chapter election ballot back now.

Ballots must be in Lansing before Oct. 1. That morning, all returned ballots will be gathered and the count will begin.

Ballots were not sent to members at chapters where there were no contested races.

If you have questions, contact Stephanie Short at stephanie@mco-seiu.org or call (517)485-3310.

IN MEMORIAM: THUMB OFFICER KEVIN FOREN



Thumb Officer Kevin Foren passed away Sept. 3.

CO Foren had five years of service with the MDOC and was part of the Emergency Response Team. He previously worked at Michigan Reformatory. Rest in peace, CO Foren.

You're invited: Free Pheasant Run Sept. 24-27



16th Annual Military Veterans Law Enforcement Officers 1st Responders Free Pheasant Hunt September 24th thru 27th, 2021

Sponsors needed to help keep this annual hunt free for military veterans & law enforcement officers, 1st responders and dispatchers

Sponsors mail to: TAWA VETS HUNT 20434 60th Ave., Marion, MI 49665

For every \$75 sponsorship a hunter will receive 5 birds dropped in the field, guides with great dogs and an all day lunch buffet.

For Sponsorship Information and to Sign Up contact: Chuck Connell @ vetslawhunt@gmail.com 231-743-6483 www.veteranshunt.org www.preserveshunt.com

[View the flyer on our website.](#)

MCO members are welcome to join the 16th annual Military Veteran, Law Enforcement, and First Responders FREE Pheasant Hunt. It will be Sept. 24-27 at Tails-A-Waggin' Acres in Marion, MI. More details are in [this flyer](#). To sign up, contact Chuck Connell at vetslawhunt@gmail.com or call (231)743-6483.

The MCO Military Members Committee has sponsored this event for the past six years. We hope many MCO members can join in!

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FY '22 BUDGET ADDRESSES RECRUITMENT, WELLNESS

Last week, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the legislature agreed on a budget that includes funding for 800 new corrections officers.

The MDOC budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year includes \$7,373,700 in additional one-time funding for training COs. This means overall funding for training new officers will be more than \$21

million.

The MDOC budget also includes an additional \$800,000 for employee wellness programs, bringing total funding for these programs to \$2 million.

In total, the corrections budget will be \$2.07 billion.

The next fiscal year runs Oct. 1, 2021 through Sept. 30, 2022.

BARGAINED PAYMENTS COMING TO CHECKS SOON

Attendance and physical fitness incentives, dry cleaning allowances, and longevity payments will appear on paychecks soon. See scheduled payment dates at right.

Additionally, the 2 percent wage increase takes effect Oct. 1 and will start appearing on paychecks Oct. 14.

The personal leave grant of 12 hours will be added to annual leave banks and will also be reflected on Oct. 14 paychecks.

These payments and increases aren't just given to us – MCO bargains them. Bargaining isn't free. It takes time and money to gather data on retention rates, wages of corrections staff in other states, and other evidence we need to

prepare for negotiations. This is one reason why it's so vital that all members reauthorize their dues by Oct. 2. Details on how are in the story at right.

For more details on these payments, see Articles 22, 27, and 37 of the contract.

Payment	Amount	Date
Uniform allowance	\$575	Oct. 14
Longevity	varies by years of service	Oct. 28
Sick/physical fitness incentive	varies by amount of sick time used	Nov. 11

This is your last chance to reauthorize before dues stop!



Saturday, Oct. 2, is the last day to reauthorize your union dues before they automatically stop.

The [HRMN portal](#) is open for you to log in and reauthorize ([use this link](#) if you're on a mobile device). If you aren't sure how, go to [mco-seiu.org/reauthorize](#) for step-by-step instructions.

Or, you can call the HR Service Center at 877-766-6447 and ask to reauthorize. Their hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This means the last day you can reauthorize by phone is Friday, Oct. 1.

You can always reach out to MCO if you are having trouble. Call us at (517)485-3310.

Thanks, members, for standing together in MCO.



IN MEMORIAM: CTO OSTREWICH

Corrections Transportation Officer Thad Ostrewich passed away Sept. 28.

CTO Ostrewich was based in St. Louis. He had 27 years with the MDOC.

Services will be October 23. [Details are here.](#)

Rest in peace, CTO Ostrewich.

**BALLOT
COUNT
TOMORROW**

Chapter election ballots will be counted Friday, Oct. 1.
New chapter officials will be listed [on our website](#) next week.

VOTE NOW ON THE TENTATIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT FOR 2022-2024

As reported last week, MCO and the Office of the State Employer (OSE) have reached a tentative agreement on a three-year contract. It includes a 7% pay raise over the first two years of the contract, a \$3,250 retention incentive, guaranteed overtime pay on worked holidays, an additional state

holiday, healthcare enhancements and state paid funeral leave. Read the [summary of changes](#) on our website.

The proposed contract is subject to a ratification vote by the membership. On Oct. 16, invitations to vote were emailed to the .gov email address of all eligible voters. If you do not see it,

please check your junk folder. If it's not there, call us at (517)485-3310. We will verify your eligibility to vote and send you an invitation.

The deadline to vote is 8 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 26. The count will be Oct. 28. Results will be announced the day of the count.

SIGN UP NOW FOR HEALTH INSURANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS IN 2022

Benefits Open Enrollment is going on now through Nov. 9. The effective date for elections and changes is Jan. 1, 2022, and when deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums reset.

No new plans are being introduced during BOE this year.

Starting Jan. 1, 2022, the State Dental Plan annual benefit maximum for Diagnostic & Preventive Services, Basic Services, and Major Services will

increase to \$2,000, up from the current \$1,500 maximum.

The BOE website, www.mi.gov/BOE, remains the one-stop-shop for enrollment information, and www.mi.gov/FSA is still the home for FSA resources as well.

You do not need to re-enroll each year to retain your existing insurance elections, but you are strongly encouraged to review your elections each year

to ensure that your benefits will meet your needs for the coming year. FSA elections do not automatically renew. You must re-enroll each year if you wish to participate in the FSA benefit.

This story was edited for space.

[Read complete details on the Civil Service Commission website.](#)

- Story from the Michigan Civil Service Commission

APPLICATIONS BEING ACCEPTED NOW FOR THE CLOSER TO HOME TRANSFER LIST

Closer to Home Transfer applications are being accepted now through Oct. 31.

To be eligible to apply for a Closer to Home Transfer, employees must:

- Have status.

- Have not voluntarily transferred during the 12-month period prior to the application date.

- Have no record of disciplinary action or unsatisfactory service rating during the two years preceding the date

of the filling of position.

If you qualify, [go to our website for more information and to learn how to apply](#). If you have questions, contact [Stephanie Short](#) at (517)485-3310 ext. 115.

FSA ASSAULTED BY PATIENT

A Forensic Security Assistant (FSA) at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry was pinned and punched in the head by a patient Oct. 7 as she was assisting him with his laundry. Staff immediately responded.

The FSA has shoulder and neck injuries.

This story illustrates that, like COs, FSAs have dangerous jobs. Thank you to all FSAs for their dedication.

BRIEFLY: CRISIS FUND AND 12-HOUR SHIFT UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who supported the MCO Crisis Fund by buying tickets for the 2021 raffle. The drawing was Wednesday at the MCO central conference. A list of winners is on our website.

The MCO Crisis Fund supports members facing a catastrophe. To those who support the fund, thank you.

Twelve-hour shift votes were held last week at Woodland and Thumb.

WCC members voted in favor of 12s and TCF members voted against.

WCC is scheduled to start 12-hour shifts in January. More info will be shared at the chapter level.