



STAFFING CRISIS CONTINUES TO PLAGUE MDOC PRISONS

A report provided by the MDOC in December 2021 outlined that there were 944 correctional officer vacancies at that time. MCO estimates, given the current rate of retirement and attrition, this number will rise to over 1,000 officer vacancies by the end of January.

This staffing crisis continues to have a devastating and wide-ranging impact on the working conditions at the prisons. Facilities have been forced to increase mandated overtime, close multiple employee positions during shifts, restrict prisoner movement, and require officers to work in understaffed housing units. These conditions threaten to exhaust our

already beleaguered workforce and impair the safety of officers and the prison population.

During this month, there were ten facilities with staffing levels deemed low enough to give them “contingency” staffing status, easing the rules to allow COVID-positive employees to return to work five days after testing positive for COVID-19, even if they were still experiencing mild symptoms. This measure also allowed the facilities given “contingency” staffing status to close their leave books, disallowing officers who are not COVID-positive to use their paid leave time.

MCO President, Byron Osborn, has called on correctional officers working in state prisons to call their state legislators to make them aware of the working conditions employees are facing at facilities, and urge them to work with the union and the MDOC to find innovative solutions to address the officer recruitment and retention problem within the MDOC.

If you are an MCO member and would like to contact your [State Senator](#) and [State Representative](#), click the links provided to find your legislator.

UPDATES...

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- The State Senate Oversight Committee will be holding a hearing to discuss staffing and other issues the MDOC is facing at **2 p.m. on Tuesday, February 1** in Room 1300 at the Binsfeld Office Building. There will be a presentation from MDOC Director Heidi Washington.

- The State House Appropriations Subcommittee on Corrections will be holding a committee hearing at **10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, February 2** in Room 308 in the House Office Building to address staffing issues at the MDOC.

CALENDARS

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

If you still need a calendar book, email [Adam Earley](#).

EXCHANGE TRANSFER LIST

The Exchange Transfer List will be cleared at the end of January. If you requested to be placed on the list before July 2021, your name will be removed. If you do not want your name removed from the list, please e-mail [Jonovan Luckey](#) by January 31. [Click here for more information about the Exchange Transfer List.](#)

COVID-19 RESOURCES

- At-home, rapid COVID-19 tests are available for free at [COVIDTests.gov](#). Every household is eligible for four free tests that will be shipped directly to your home.

*If you do not have access to a computer, use the test kit order fulfillment helpline at **1-800-232-2033** to place your order.

IN MEMORIAM...

Gone, but never forgotten. Please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.

2022

January

Officer Ben Gulick, DRF

2021

December

Officer Eric Napier, JCF
Officer Cliff Branch, SLF
Officer Dustin Hofert, ICF

November

Officer Armando Gonzales,
MTU

October

Officer Mike Davis, JCF

MICHIGAN CORRECTIONS

ORGANIZATION

SEIU LOCAL 526M

421 W. KALAMAZOO

LANSING, MI 48933

CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR LONG-TIME MCO LABOR REP.

Contributing Writer: J. Martin Foldie, Esq.



A Celebration of Life gathering and luncheon honoring long-time MCO Labor Rep. John Bowers will be held at 1 p.m. this Friday, April 29, at Coral Gables Restaurant in East Lansing.

John passed away on Friday, March 11, 2022. John was a valued member of the MCO family. Starting his career with MCO in 1989, he spent 20 years working on behalf of corrections officers and forensic security assistants. Throughout his career John represented the members in 49 arbitration cases, winning the vast majority of them.

As a Labor Relations Representative, John had other duties aside from litigat-

ing issues in arbitration on behalf of members. John's duties included traveling to facilities to meet with management to resolve issues in-house. John's mild-mannered, and friendly approach to reaching out to administrators was warmly accepted and successful. John understood that to successfully represent members it was important to build upon the labor-management relationship. He believed that the best way for the parties to resolve problems was through the exercise of joint-problem solving.

However, he also understood that when the parties could not resolve the issues in-house, it was important to agree to disagree and advance the issue to arbitration. Always well prepared, John had a unique understanding of the facts, controlling contract language, and excelled in delivering his arguments in a concise and eloquent matter.

During his tenure with MCO, he went back to school and obtained a master's degree in Labor Relations from Michigan State University so that he could better serve the membership. John loved his co-workers and truly viewed them as family. He will be missed.

For John's obituary and full details for his Celebration of Life luncheon, please visit the Estes-Leadley [website](#).



AUSTIN BROWN JOINS MCO STAFF



Please join us in welcoming MCO's new Member Support Specialist, Austin Brown.

Austin joins us after three years of experience as a union rep, union steward, and executive board member with BCTGM local 3G (Kellogg workers union) and a year and a half with UFCW 951 as a labor relations specialist/Union Rep, representing members at JBS, a meat processing plant, Knouse Foods, Meijer, Kroger, and Rite Aid.

He is currently attending Eastern Gateway Community College to obtain a business management degree with a human resource focus.

"I am excited to join the members and staff of MCO to help build a stronger membership, so we are able to keep the current contract benefits and fight for more things they deserve," he said. "Part of my job as a Member Support Specialist is member engagement and I look forward to figuring out a way for our members and staff to be able to be more engaged in the union and making their collective voices heard."

Feel free to contact Austin at austin@mco-seiu.org.

NEW MCO CONTRACT NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The 2022-24 contract is available on the MCO [website](#). Current members will receive a physical copy of the contract in the mail as soon as they are printed.

MCO PRESIDENT BYRON OSBORN'S MESSAGE TO COs ON CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS WEEK

As we close out Correctional Officer Week, I would like to revisit a few lines from Proclamation 5649, issued by President Ronald Reagan in 1987. The proclamation reads, "No group of Americans has a more difficult or less publicly visible job than the brave men and women who work in our correctional facilities... Their profession requires careful and constant vigilance, and the threat of violence is always present. At the same time, these dedicated employees try to improve the living conditions of those who are being confined... It is appropriate that we honor the correctional officers in all our institutions, at every level of government, for their invaluable contributions."

These words convey a truth that as corrections officers we know well. Most people will never understand the importance of the job we do and will never fully appreciate us. When we don our corrections officer's uniform and walk through those gates, we serve as the voice of

authority, while also being charged with ensuring the safety and welfare of our fellow officers, other correctional employees, and the prisoners incarcerated at our facilities. We are the hidden branch of the criminal justice system.

On behalf of the MCO Executive Board, I want to recognize and thank my fellow State Corrections Officers. Your continued dedication and resolve, working through a staffing crisis and pandemic, keeping citizens safe, is inspiring. The Michigan Corrections Organization is proud to continually recognize the first full week of May as Correctional Officer Week.

To all the brave men and women who serve, thank you. Thank you for your service to the public. Thank you for the role you play in public safety. Thank you for the courage you display every day.

[Read the 2022 CO Week Proclamation on our website.](#)

MDOC CEREMONY HONORS EXCEPTIONAL OFFICERS

On Thursday, May 5, the MDOC held their Michigan Corrections Employee Appreciation Banquet. This was the first banquet held since the start of the pandemic in 2019. Hosted by MTU Administrative Assistant Matt Mates, this year's event honored the award nominees, finalists, and winners from 2022 as well as the previous 2 years when the event had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns.

During the presentation of awards to the Corrections Officer of the Year finalists, the department and crowd took a moment to honor fallen CTO, Thaddeus Ostrewich. Officer Ostrewich's widow, Katy, accepted the award to standing ovation in recognition of his sacrifice and her resolve.

2022 Corrections Officer of the Year award winner Neil Costello closed out the night with a speech highlighting the challenges of the job, the crucial role corrections officers play, the impact the job has on employee wellness, and his love for his family and his fellow officers.

[Read this article](#) for a full list of the 2022 Officer of the Year candidates.



CO NEIL COSTELLO



CTO THADDEUS OSTREWICH

MCO Announces 2022 Scholarship Winners!!!

The 2022 MCO Scholarship Committee is proud to announce this year's MCO Scholarship Winners. After careful examination of the applications that were entered this year, these phenomenal students displayed the academic qualifications, and leadership skills required of a MCO Scholarship recipient. We are proud to support them as they set out to achieve their educational goals. Congratulations to all of you!



Here are the 2022 recipients:

- Breden Niemiec
- Aiden Holley
- Morgan Nowery
- Lucy Bennin
- Katharyne Zimmerman
- Emmie Gleason
- Olivia Datema
- Carlen Deatsman
- Emmalyn Holmquist
- Samantha Goodman
- Sara Bower
- Kayla Londo
- Lilyanna Penk
- Jaylyne Lindemann
- Thomas Weber
- Gracie Yerian
- Madeline Braman
- Ajah Fink
- Hailey Sands



BULLETIN

MAY 19, 2022

MCO CENTRAL DELEGATES ELECT NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD

Please join us in congratulating the newly elected MCO State Executive Board! Central committee delegates selected Board members at their meeting yesterday in Lansing.

Here are the results:

- **President – Byron Osborn, URF (unopposed)**
- **Vice President – Ray Sholtz, SLF (unopposed)**
- **Treasurer – Ed Clements, AMF (unopposed)**
- **Recording Secretary – Cary Johnson, JCF (unopposed)**



Swearing in of newly elected Executive Board

For trustees, top vote getters who secured a seat on the Board are listed below in bold.

- **Trustee – Tim Fleury, LMF (79 votes)**
- **Trustee – Dave Pasche, MTU (78 votes)**
- **Trustee – Marcus Collins, DDC (77 votes)**
- **Trustee – Mark Dunn, ECF (73 votes)**
- **Trustee – Georgiann Stan, WHV (73 votes)**
- **Trustee – Rick Benson, URF (13 votes)**



Election Committee counting ballots

Duties of Board members can be found in Articles 10 and 13 of the [MCO Constitution and Bylaws](#).

The Central Committee is made up of the chapter president, vice president and other leader delegates from each chapter. Information on Central Committee is in Article 12 of the MCO Constitution and Bylaws.

Thanks, members, for your continued support.



Chapter leaders attending Central Conference



MCO EXECUTIVE BOARD MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS ABOUT THE STAFFING CRISIS:

Dear Members,

Over the past several months as this staffing crisis has continued to worsen, the number of calls, texts, and emails we have received from members and local leaders has drastically increased. You're all voicing the same concern that this crisis is still snowballing, and the working conditions are increasingly unsafe. The excessive overtime is physically exhausting many of you and severely disrupting your much-needed decompression time away from work. Your daily routines and time with family are being disrupted. Every day, on every shift at most prisons there are a high number of security positions that are supposed to be manned by officers that are left unmanned due to shortages. You are being required to continue to run the routine activities of the prison with far less officers than are supposed to be there. Instances of housing units with 240 prisoners that require 3 officers being staffed with 2 have become far too commonplace. Each day this persists, the tone of the conversations become more desperate and dejected, and it's not just officers voicing concerns. Prison wardens have described the daily struggle they have with running the prisons safely for all staff and prisoners with officer vacancy rates ranging from 10 percent to over 30 percent at some locations.

Even though the Department has stepped up recruitment efforts and academy numbers have been improving, it has not helped the overall problem. According to our records, from October 1, 2021, until July of 2022, we have lost over 200 more officers than we have gained when taking into account all retirements, resignations, transfers, and promotions. We've been working to address this perpetual staffing crisis issue since 2017 through contract negotiations, statewide informational pickets, public awareness campaigns, letters to the State Legislature, and to the Governor.

Earlier this year, our President and Vice President, Byron Osborn and Ray Sholtz, testified in the Senate Oversight Committee about the ongoing staffing crisis and the fact that any solution must focus on recruitment and retention. We stressed this point to every lawmaker that we spoke with, and were encour-

aged when the House introduced and passed a version of Corrections Budget that included provisions for recruitment and retention bonuses for corrections officers. However, as many of you noticed, those provisions were removed from the final version of the budget after negotiations between the House, Senate, and Governor concluded. In our opinion, it is a mistake that our state leadership decided to remove those items in favor of continuing the status quo of just running academies and hoping for the best. That hasn't worked for the past several years and won't work in the short or long-term.

We will continue to implore that the legislature, governor, and department work together to immediately address this staffing crisis, whether through supplemental legislation for recruitment and retention bonuses or temporary deployment of the Michigan National Guard to provide relief and security in the prisons. Every option needs to be explored; we cannot continue like this. For our part, we are willing to work with whoever it takes- the governor, the department, and both sides of the legislature to address this staffing crisis.

A number of members have expressed concerns about the effects the current working conditions are having on them and their fellow officers. We must look out for each other, if you are struggling or notice someone else struggling, please to do not hesitate to speak up. Sometimes just talking it out with someone you know can help. You can also reach out to the wellness unit at **517-335-0570**, or utilize the new Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by simply dialing **988**. Our job is stressful enough without a staffing crisis, so now more than ever we need to take care of ourselves.

We are sending this letter to tell all of you that we hear you loud and clear, we know what the conditions are and how they are affecting you and your families. Through these next steps we will be engaging you and asking for your help as we continue to testify in front of legislative committees, push the state legislature to introduce and pass bills that help us address this crisis, and hold press events to garner more media coverage about the difficulties

we're facing. We will hold our state leadership accountable and continue to put our situation in the public spotlight.

In Solidarity,



Byron Osborn
MCO President



Ray Sholtz
MCO Vice President



Ed Clements
MCO Treasurer



Cary Johnson
MCO Recording Secretary



Dave Pasche
MCO Trustee



Mark Dunn
MCO Trustee



Marcus D. Collins
MCO Trustee



Tim Fleury
MCO Trustee



Georgiann Stan
MCO Trustee



BULLETIN

Sept. 7, 2022

MDOC announces the closure of the Michigan Reformatory and four housing units at Gus Harrison

MDOC has announced the closure of the Michigan Reformatory and four housing units in the pole barn side of Gus Harrison scheduled for November 12, 2022. MCO leaders were notified this afternoon.

MDOC stated that these closures are part of a consolidation plan aimed at reducing the need for mandated overtime. They also cited the declining prison population as a contributing factor.

MDOC will now establish a bump region. This information should be released sometime within the next few weeks. MCO will update affected members frequently throughout the process.

MCO leaders will also hold chapter meetings in Ionia soon to share information about the closure process.

Please watch the MCO [website](#), email newsletters, and members-only [Facebook group](#) for updates.

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APPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED 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.

MCO ON THE RECORD...

Here are a few current news links featuring statements from MCO officials about issues our members are facing:

9/7/2022 - Bridge MI [With fewer inmates \(and of-ficers\), Michigan closes another prison](#) - "At the end of the day, if [employee] attrition isn't addressed by the summer of 2023, we're going to be in the same boat," said **Byron Osborn, president of the Michigan Corrections Organization.**

9/14/2022 - WLNS 6 [State prisons face employment challenges](#) - "Some folks are in a position, where they are holding on. "Well, listen, I'll keep working the overtime but man,

we are hoping for some light at the end of the tunnel here," said **Byron Osborn, President of the Michigan Corrections Organization...** "We're hoping they follow the lead of some other states who have instituted signing bonuses for corrections officers, condensed pay scales and retention bonuses as well."

9/22/2022 - WLNS 6 [Lawmakers seek to address corrections officer shortage](#) - **The Michigan Corrections Organization** says it all comes down to the pay and benefits. As other career paths offer more money and a job that doesn't put you at risk and as lawmakers try to resolve the issue, the problem is getting worse by the day.

MCO Members can still reauthorize their dues without a break in membership status.



From Thursday, Oct. 6 through Thursday, Oct. 13, members can reauthorize their 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.

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

IN MEMORIAM:

Gone, but never forgotten. Please keep their families in your thoughts and prayers.

August 2022

Officer Cyal Wascher, AMF

September 2022

Officer Ellis Farrar, MTU

Officer Benita Wilson, RGC

2022 MCO BIG BUCK TOURNAMENT

MCO is inviting all dues-paying members to participate in our 2022 Big Buck Tournament. Hunt where you want, anytime between Oct. 1 - Dec. 11 to be eligible to win. Visit [our website](#) for registration details and tournament rules.

The Exchange Transfer List will be cleared at the end of January.

If you requested to be placed on the list before July 2022, your name will be removed. If you do not want your name removed from the list, please e-mail the [Michigan Corrections Organization](#) by January 31, 2023. [Click here for more information about the Exchange Transfer List.](#)

Updates...

2023 Recruitment/Retention bonuses...

On November 22 MCO signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with the Office of the State Employer that will provide a **\$3,000 retention bonus** to all members who maintain continuous employment from January 8, 2023, through July 8, 2023.

This bonus will replace the current \$250 per pay period bonus that expires at the end of 2022.

New recruits and rehires that begin employment after January 8, 2023, will not receive the \$3,000 bonus, but will receive a **\$1,500 recruitment bonus** if they successfully

complete six months of continuous employment. [Click here](#) to read the full LOU.

Holiday Pay Extension...

On December 2 MCO signed a LOU with the Office of the State Employer to extend our current LOU, locking in Holiday pay for any Holiday that is physically worked in 2023 regardless of whether leave time is used in that pay period.

[Click here](#) to read the full LOU.

Both signed LOU's will be presented to the Civil Service Commission for final approval at the December 19, 2022, Commission meeting.

Remembering Jack Budd 35 year later...



December 27 is the 35th anniversary of Officer Jack Budd's murder at the former State Prison of Southern Michigan in Jackson.

An inmate, James Miller, came out of a shower area armed with a sharpened mop bucket handle and stabbed Budd. Miller was sentenced to 80-120 years in prison. He is also serving two life sentences.

Please take a moment to remember Budd on December 27.

Big Bass Tournament Winners!!!



1st Place - **Brenda Nichols (ECF)**
Bass- 4.65 lbs. and 19.75"

2nd Place - **Mike Lennox (ARF)**
3rd Place - **Georgi Stan (WHV)**

[Click here](#) to view photos of the other winning bass.

The 2023 Closer to Home Transfer List has been finalized...

The finalized 2023 Closer to Home Transfer list is available to view on the [MCO website](#). There is no set time for when those on the list will be transferred. It depends on when wardens decide to fill vacancies. There are times there are carryovers from previous years because the employee(s) never transferred.

Contact Stephanie Short at (517) 485-3310 ext. 115 with any questions.

Happy Holidays from MCO!



MCO leaders and staff would like to wish all members and their families a safe and peaceful holiday season.

****The 2023 MCO pocket calendars were mailed out the week of December 9. If you have not received your calendar by January 1, 2023, please contact MCO Central at 517-485-3310.****

Acknowledgements...



Special thanks to retiree Pam Drew for the memorial blankets laid at the Fallen Officers' Memorial.

Thank you for your service, Ed!



After serving for 17 years as a corrections officer and MCO member, 8 years as a Trustee and 4 years as Secretary Treasurer, Ed has retired from the MDOC.

Dave Pasche has been appointed as MCO's new Secretary Treasurer.

Kids Coloring Contest Winners!!!

5 years old and younger:

Cooper F.
Kasen B.

6 -10 years old:

Rossalyn B.
Zoey M.

11 years old and older:

Dillion H.
Kylee D.

Winners were chosen by random drawing. To view the winning coloring pages, [click here](#).