

# UPDATE

Office Professionals of CMU.  
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September 2008  
An Award Winning Publication

## Six Little Words to Fix America's Wage Crisis

by David Sirota

History books teem with six-word phrases, from the comforting ("Nothing to fear but fear itself") to the inspiring ("Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall") to the embarrassing ("Read my lips, no new taxes"). But the six words, "on the basis of union membership" could be more momentous than any of those. Though hardly Roosevelt's rhetoric, Reagan's bluster or Bush's clumsiness, the clause could solve America's wage crisis.

Of course, when Tom Geoghegan told me this in a Chicago park two weeks ago, I almost snarfed my coffee through my nose. Solving major social problems typically demands more than six words. But as the longtime labor lawyer and author explained his idea to me on a muggy afternoon, it started making sense.

Geoghegan reminded me that data show the more union members in an economy, the better workers' pay. The problem, he said, is that weakened labor laws are allowing companies to bully and fire union-sympathetic workers, thus driving down union membership and wages.

Enter Geoghegan's six words. If the Civil Rights Act was amended to prevent discrimination "on the basis of union membership," it would curtail corporations' anti-labor assault by making the right to join a union an official civil right.

"Hang on," I interrupted. "Joining a union isn't a civil right?"

Correct.

Under current law, if you are fired for union activity, you can only take your grievance to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) -- a Byzantine agency deliberately made more Kafkaesque by right-wing appointees and budget cuts. Today, the NLRB takes years to rule on labor law violations, often granting victims only their back pay -- a tiny cost of doing business.

Union leaders are now focused on reforming the NLRB -- an admirable goal -- but Geoghegan's plan implies that workers are harmed by being legally leashed to Washington in the first place. His proposal says rather than being forced to rely on an unreliable bureaucracy for protection, workers should be empowered to defend themselves.

The six words would do just that. Regardless of whether the NLRB is strengthened or further weakened, persecuted workers would be able to haul union-busting thugs into court. There -- unlike at the NLRB -- plaintiffs can subpoena company records and win costly punitive damages.

Bolstering his argument, Geoghegan told me to consider variations in corporate behavior.

For example, because the Civil Rights Act bars racial discrimination, businesses are motivated to try to prevent bigotry: They want to avoid being sued. This is why no company brags about being racist.

But when it comes to unions, there is no such deterrent. The lack of civil rights protection effectively encourages businesses to punish pro-union employees -- and publicize the abuse to intimidate their workforce. By making the six words law, the dynamic would shift. Companies would have a reason -- fear of litigation -- to respect workers' rights.

When Geoghegan and I finished chatting, I remembered why I believe he is America's most talented writer and thinker on labor issues. His relative anonymity is a tragicomic commentary on the media and the American Left. The Milton Friedmans are celebrated by pundits and cast in bronze by conservative think tanks, while the Geoghegans are dismissed by the chattering class and ignored by a progressive movement that regularly venerates Hollywood celebrities as its heroes.

Perhaps, though, this proposal will change things. In developing a way to shift incentives, Geoghegan has discovered a solution that both unionists and economists can love. It cribs the best from liberals' pro-union sympathies and conservatives' distrust of Big Government, and should make him famous (or at least a Cabinet secretary). After all, anyone who can bring such disparate ideologies and adversaries together is worthy of serious consideration -- as is his six-word stroke of genius.

*David Sirota is a best-selling author whose newest book, "The Uprising," was just released in June. He is a fellow at the Campaign for America's Future and a board member of the Progressive States Network -- both nonpartisan organizations.*



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### Sneak Peek

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# Your Health Care May Decide the 2008 Election

By Robert Borosage

Published on OurFuture.org ([www.ourfuture.org](http://www.ourfuture.org))

Americans will begin to tune into the election again around the conventions. And in the fall, they'll start to take a closer look at who the candidates are and what they believe. Iraq will be big no doubt; the economy bigger. But health care may just be the pothole that cracks up Sen. John McCain's Straight Talk Express.

Now we're in the presidential campaign's silly season. The primaries are over; the conventions yet to come. Americans are tuning out politics and dialing in baseball and the Olympics, vacations and the price of gas. Senator Barack Obama is traveling abroad, demonstrating that he really is a responsible driver. And Senator John McCain seems intent on running into every pothole in the road.

This week, he published an op-ed in the New York Post [1] slamming Obama for agreeing with the Iraqi Prime Minister that it is time to bring the troops home by 2010. Sure, McCain admitted, "Iraq's army will be equipped and trained by the middle of next year," but it will still need a lot of help. "The Iraqi air force, for one, still lags behind, and no modern army can operate without air cover." Particularly not against the fearsome al-Qaeda Air Force.

And McCain didn't even mention the need to build Iraq a blue water navy. The \$3 trillion Nobel Laureate Joe Stiglitz estimates we've squandered on the war – about a billion a day in direct and indirect costs – aren't nearly enough.

Americans will begin to tune into the election again around the conventions. And in the fall, they'll start to take a closer look at who the candidates are and what they believe. Issues matter less in this assessment than broad measures of the candidate's character and sense about whether he has a clue.

In this assessment, I suspect that one issue, seldom mentioned now, is going to matter a great deal by November. Iraq will be big no doubt; the economy bigger. But health care may just be the pothole that cracks up McCain's Straight Talk Express.

People worry a lot about affording health care. Workers accept lower wages with employers that offer health care. They hang onto lousy jobs to keep their health care. Most labor negotiations and disputes center largely on the costs of health care. On this issue, attention is paid over kitchen tables across the country.

So this fall, Americans will discover an inconvenient truth about John McCain. He wants you to lose your employer-based health care. He thinks you aren't

sufficiently conscious about the cost of your health care, and you are using too much of it.

His plan is designed – with sugar and sticks – to push you to negotiate on your own with the friendly insurance companies. He'll give you a tax credit – \$2,500 for an individual, \$5,000 for a family – to help you pay the price. And he'll revoke the tax exemption for any health benefits your employer provides. Under his plan, those benefits will be taxed as income. McCain says this will reduce our health care expenditures. He might be right. His preferred option – health saving accounts – generally feature low monthly payments and very high deductibles. People tend to insure themselves against catastrophe and take a chance on routine health care.

On average, health savings accounts will work pretty well if you are young and healthy and lucky. But if you are sick, if you have suffered serious illnesses in the past, if you have what insurers call a "pre-existing condition," or if you are older and at higher risk, you're in trouble. For many, insurance won't be available at any price. That's why Elizabeth Edwards noted that, neither she nor McCain would be eligible for coverage since both have struggled with cancer. Many more will find adequate coverage unaffordable. Others will have to wrestle with choosing between paying to see a doctor or buying the weekly groceries. You'll be more "sensitive

to price," but you might not think that a good thing.

McCain extols the benefits of private health insurance, but he's never had to negotiate with insurance companies. He's been on government-provided health care virtually his entire life. He was raised on military health care, as the son of an admiral. He then went to the Naval Academy and to the military. A year after leaving the military, he was headed to the Congress and enjoying the best government-supplied health care of all.

For the nine of 10 voters that have some kind of health insurance at work, the contrast will be clear. Obama will give them a choice between the health care they have and being able to buy into a public plan, something like Medicare. McCain will tax their employer based health care, and give them a break to negotiate their own deal with the insurance companies. At the same time, he will liberate the insurance companies from the state-based regulations that have provided some protection for consumers.

Invest in the Iraqi Air Force. Tax employer-based health care. Liberate the insurance companies. Leave you on your own on health care. If this keeps up, voters may decide it is time to take the keys away from the Straight Talk Express.

**John McCain  
wants you to lose  
your employer-  
based health care.**



## An important message from Vice President Laura Hope

*Dear Sisters and Brothers:*

*We are fast approaching a bargaining year, and with the unstable economy, now more than ever, we need to remain united and strong in our union. And part of being and maintaining a strong union is by serving each other. [Click here](#) to access a flyer listing the vacancies we need to fill as soon as possible.*

### REMINDER!

The University is using the “floater holiday” for December 24 and will be shut-down for a full two weeks during the holiday break. We will be using our vacation or personal time for December 22 (8 hours) and December 23 (4 hours). The University will cover the other 4 hours on December 23 and 8 hours on January 2.

### Personnel Transactions

#### New Employees

Robin Berry, Sec/PT OP4, RPLS, 8/11/08  
Rebecca Salter, Adm Sec OP5, RPLS, 8/11/08  
Michelle Streng, Spec Clerk OP4, Fac Mgt 8/11/08  
Janel Storey, Adm Clerk OP6, Purchasing 8/18/08  
Amber Hawkins, Spec Clerk OP4, Phy Therapy, 8/18/08  
Gayla Levley, Sr Spec Clerk OP5, Col of Grad Studies, 9/2/08

#### Promotions

Kelli Moeggenborg, Sr Spec Clerk OP5, Registrar's, 8/11/08 (previously Spec Clerk OP4, Registrar's)

#### Transfers

Diane Craven, Exec Sec OP6, Ath, 8/4/08 (previously Adm Clerk OP6, Purchasing)  
Samantha Minnis, Sr Spec Clerk OP5, Interlibrary Loan, 8/14/08 (previously part time ST3, Clarke Hist Lib)

#### Separations

Beth Boughan, Off Asst OP3, Col of Grad Studies, 8/8/08  
Sarah Evenden, Sec/PT OP4, ELI, 8/8/08

**Quote of the Month**  
*“Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you can do these things. Among them are . . . a few . . . Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or business man from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid.”*

*-- President Dwight D. Eisenhower, November 8, 1954*



## OP's Earn Staff Excellence Awards

Five members of Local 6888 have proven their dedication in providing excellent service to the students, faculty, and fellow employees of CMU. These individuals stand out among their peers in exhibiting the four service excellence values -- caring, knowledge, availability and follow through.

OP's who have earned a 2008 Staff Excellence Award are as follows:

Amy Powell, Executive Secretary, Communication and Dramatic Arts; Brenda Pung, Administrative Secretary, Athletics; Sherry Sytek, Senior Specialist Clerk, Human Resources; Kristi Wood, Executive Secretary, The Herbert H. And Grace A. Dow College of Health Professions; Melinda Zeneberg, Executive Secretary, School of Music.

All recipients will receive an engraved plaque and a senior officer parking permit at an awards ceremony held on September 16 in the Bovee UC from 3 to 5 p.m.

Congratulations to these members of Local 6888!

## Best 'Out of Office' Automatic Email Replies

- 1 I am currently out of the office at a job interview and will reply to you if I fail to get the position. Please be prepared for my mood.
- 2 You are receiving this automatic notification because I am out of the office. If I was in, chances are you wouldn't have received anything at all.
- 3 Sorry to have missed you, but I'm at the doctor's having my brain and heart removed so I can be promoted to our management team.
- 4 I will be unable to delete all the emails you send me until I return from vacation. Please be patient, and your mail will be deleted in the order it was received.
- 5 Thank you for your email. Your credit card has been charged \$5.99 for the first 10 words and \$1.99 for each additional word in your message.
- 6 The email server is unable to verify your server connection. Your message has not been delivered. Please restart your computer and try sending again. (The beauty of this is that when you return, you can see who did this over and over and over...)
- 7 Thank you for your message, which has been added to a queuing system. You are currently in 352<sup>nd</sup> place, and can expect to receive a reply in approximately 19 weeks.
- 8 Hi, I'm thinking about what you've just sent me. Please wait by your PC for my response.
- 9 I've run away to join a different circus.

*Submitted by Marianne McJames, Institutional Research*

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DAILY THOUGHT: Some people are like slinkies -- not really good for anything, but they bring a smile to your face when pushed down the stairs!

# Wal-Mart is Telling Employees How to Vote!

We've known for years that Wal-Mart has violated labor and anti-discrimination laws and ruthlessly fought efforts by its workers to form unions.

And now, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, Wal-Mart is so intimidated by the very possibility of a unionized workforce that its supervisors have been holding mandatory meetings essentially telling employees to vote against Democrats and Sen. Barack Obama this November.

Wal-Mart is taking this outrageous step because the Democrats and Barack Obama have committed to pass the Employee Free Choice Act to restore workers' freedom to form unions and bargain for fair wages, health care, decent working conditions and a real voice on the job. All of America's workers have the right to freely decide whom to vote for independent of employer pressure and intimidation.

Wal-Mart's reported actions are just one piece of a large and well-organized effort by corporate America to continue exploiting America's workers by preventing them from forming unions. With our economy struggling and workers' wages stagnant, it is critical that we fight workplace intimidation and other heavy-handed corporate tactics. CEOs and Big Business already have too much influence in our political system

and telling their employees whom to vote for is simply unacceptable.

Corporate giants like Wal-Mart have been suppressing workers' wages and passing along health care costs to hardworking taxpayers like you for years. Wal-Mart executives are getting rich, while we're being left behind. They understand what is at stake in this election, and so do we—a real voice at work for:

- Fair pay;
- Health care for all;
- Equal treatment;
- Safe workplaces; and
- A secure retirement.

And Wal-Mart is ready to use its incredible corporate power as America's largest private employer to corrupt the political system to safeguard its profits.

**[Tell Wal-Mart to stop intimidating workers TODAY!](#)**

*From AFL-CIO Working Families e-Activist Network*



# VICTORY!

One of the most significant product and toy safety laws in almost two decades is awaiting President Bush's signature, and you helped make it happen.

Activists sent more than 300,000 emails, made countless phone calls and visited members of Congress urging them to pass the bill. And last week Congress did—with only four 'no' votes out of 535 members.

But it wasn't easy. Our battle against all those who wanted to weaken or kill this legislation was long and difficult. We were up against some of the biggest lobbies in Washington—the major manufacturers, chemical producers and even the oil companies. They wanted to keep the status quo, and spent lavishly to do so.

Tough bills were passed, but negotiations on a final bill dragged on for months. Each passing day meant the possibility of a weaker law.

Yet big industry was up against a bigger force—the American consumer. You didn't have the deep pockets or the access, but you had a voice, and you worked for months to let your lawmakers know you wanted them to do the right thing.

You wanted toys that didn't contain dangerous lead and chemicals. Imports that were inspected, not just passed on to store shelves. And a fully funded and staffed Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), not a toothless agency that only had one toy tester on staff and half the employees it had 30 years ago.

And you got it. The new law will significantly change product and toy safety in the United States, including:

- Virtually banning lead and certain phthalates in children's products. These chemicals can seep into children's

systems where they remain for life, and are linked to serious health problems and cancer.

- Preventing deadly imports from entering our borders. More inspectors will be placed at ports, and recalled products will be banned from being shipped to other nations, where they often found their way back to U.S. store shelves.

- Making sure toys and kids' products are certified safe and meet rigorous standards before we buy them. In the first four months of 2008 alone, CPSC has initiated 121 recalls of unsafe products, totaling nearly ten million products.

- Increasing the CPSC staff to 500 and hiking its budget over 50 percent during the next five years. The watchdogs get more teeth by hiking fines on violators from \$5,000 to \$100,000, with a maximum penalty of \$15 million. Employees who blow the whistle on their crooked companies will be protected, and states will have the power to act quickly if new safety hazards arise.

- Giving shoppers better information about dangerous products more quickly. A public, searchable Web site will have information from consumers, hospitals and public safety agencies about injuries, illnesses and deaths related to products.

Considering that the CPSC itself estimates that dangerous products are related to 28,200 deaths and 33.6 million injuries each year—the challenge of making our store shelves safer is enormous.

With your help, Consumers Union will continue to help ensure that the CPSC does its job, the new law is implemented correctly, and consumers get the best protections possible.

## Workers Independent News

### Big Iowa Meat Company Not Kosher When It Comes To Child Labor

The nation's largest supplier of kosher meat has violated child labor laws dozens of times. Jesse Russell reports:

Nearly 60 cases of child labor law violations have been allegedly uncovered at Agriprocessors kosher meat packing plant in Postville, Iowa. In a statement, Iowa's Labor Commissioner Dave Neil said the investigation found "egregious violations of virtually every aspect of Iowa's child labor laws." In May of this year 389 illegal immigrants were arrested during a raid on the plant. That raid and months of investigations led to the 57 cases of child labor violations being uncovered. The violations include exceeding allowable work hours, exposure to hazardous chemicals, failure to obtain permits, and more. Neil has suggested that the violations be prosecuted to "the fullest extent of the law." The company has not commented on the allegations. In Iowa it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to work in meat packing plants.

### Eight Hundred Thousand More Americans Are Suffering In Poverty

By Doug Cunningham

New U.S. Census Bureau poverty numbers were released this week. As corporations spend millions of dollars to lavishly entertain and hustle delegates to the Democratic

# Sweetheart Scholarship Raffle

**First Prize:** 2 days & 1 night at Soaring Eagle Resort, plus meal allowance and \$400 cash!  
(room is double occupancy)

**Consolation Prize:** Romantic dinner cruise for 2 on the Saginaw Bay.

\$5.00 per ticket. Drawing date is January 15, 2009.

All proceeds go to the Saginaw Field & Stream Scholarship Fund.

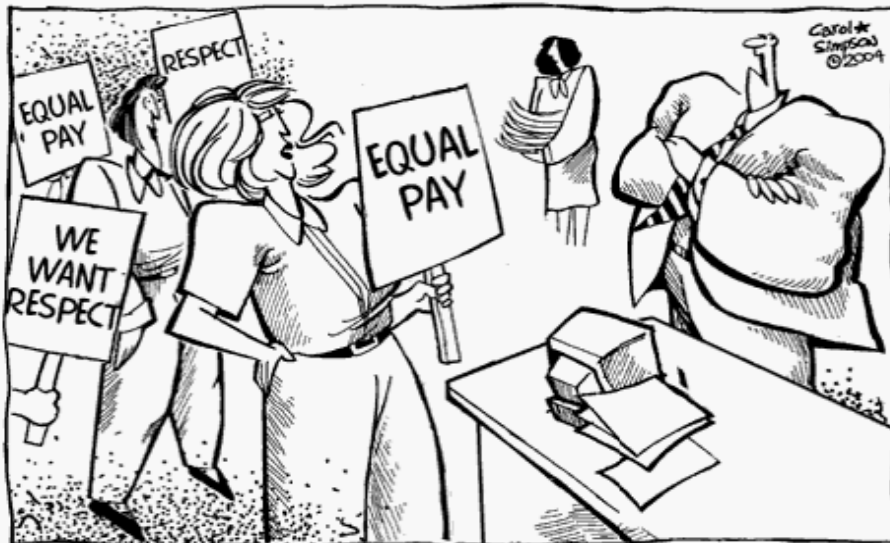
Unlimited tickets available - Need not be present to win.

Contact Caral Turner at 774-7383 or [turne1cj@cmich.edu](mailto:turne1cj@cmich.edu).

National Convention millions of Americans who desperately need politicians to end poverty are suffering. Candy Hill of Catholic Charities USA says hundreds of thousands more Americans are living in poverty this year than last.










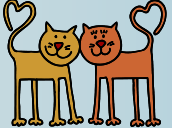
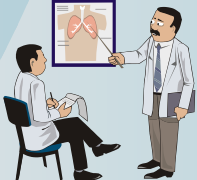


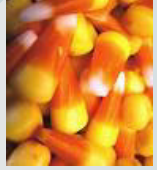

[Hill]: "So eight hundred thousand more people living in poverty in 2007 than in 2006. And of that number 500,000 are children. The increase is 500,000 in children and 200,000 in seniors. And for us that's just morally wrong. We feel that any increase - or even if the number is staying flat - is unacceptable in this country."

Hill says America lacks a powerful devoted social movement committed to ending poverty. Catholic Charities believes that is immoral and must be changed.



"Whatever happened to a good cry in the Ladies Room?"

# October 2008

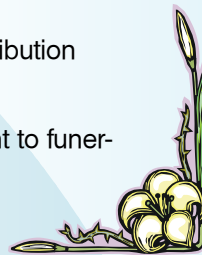
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>Monthly Observances:</b> Class Reunion Month; Domestic Violence Awareness; Emotional Wellness; Global Diversity Awareness; Breast Cancer Awareness; Crime Prevention Month; Work and Family Month; Positive Attitude Month; Self-Promotion Month			<b>1</b> Child Health Day 	<b>2</b> Custodial Workers Day 	<b>3</b> World Smile Day 	<b>4</b> 1946-U.S. Navy seized oil refineries in order to break a 20-state post-war strike
<b>5</b> World Teachers Day 	<b>6</b> 1986-1,700 female flight attendants won an 18-year lawsuit against United Airlines, which had fired them for getting married	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Native Americans' Day 	<b>9</b> World Sight Day 	<b>10</b> World Mental Health Day	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> 1902-Fourteen miners killed & 22 wounded by scabherders at Pana, Illinois	<b>13</b> Columbus Day 	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> National Grouch Day 	<b>16</b> Boss's Day 	<b>17</b> Mammography Day	<b>18</b> Sweetest Day 
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Osteoporosis Day	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Lung Health Day 	<b>25</b> Make A Difference Day
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Navy Day 	<b>28</b> National Chocolates Day 	<b>29</b> Internet Day	<b>30</b> Candy Corn Day 	<b>31</b> Halloween 	

## *In Memory*

Theodosia "Rosie" McDade, Mother of Paula McDade, ProfEd. Memorial contribution made to Beaumont Hospice.

Elizabeth Yuncker, Mother of Dolores Krueger, Retiree. Memorial contribution made to St. Joseph the Worker School.

Pat Horgan, Husband of Sharon Horgan, ProfEd. Floral arrangement sent to funeral home.



### **Donations to Staff Serious and Catastrophic Leave Banks**

CMU staff employees are invited to make donations of vacation hours to the Office Professional, Professional Administrative, Senior Officer, Service Maintenance, and/or Supervisory Technical Catastrophic Leave banks. Donations can be made on one hour increments and there is no limit to the amount of time you can donate, as long as you do not exceed your available balance.

Vacation hours can be donated during the pay periods beginning Aug. 24 and ending Sept. 20. Donations should be noted on the bottom of the time sheet that is forwarded to Payroll. Please be sure to indicate to which bank you are making your donation.

Details outlining the program, and applications, are available on Local 6888's web site at <http://www.uawlocal6888.org/standcomm.htm>.

**FOR SALE** Computer desk. Purchased new 18 months ago, excellent condition. \$75. Contact Robin at 588-2674 or 774-1887.



## **September Birthdays**

THERESA AMES  
LINDA BAILEY  
KIM BAILEY  
NANETTE CLAPP  
ANN DANIELSKI  
KIMBERLY DEVRIES  
ANITA GORDON  
CONNIE HALL  
DEBRA SPRANGER  
AMY HODGES

MARY JO JONES  
KATHLEEN JUSSILA  
ALETA KIMBALL  
CHRISTINE NOTHSTINE  
BRENDA PUNG  
LOREE RECKER  
DIANNE SCHUMACHER  
HOLLY WHITEHEAD  
KRISTI WOOD

### **Executive Board**

Karen Bellingar  
President

Laura Hope  
1st Vice President

Caral Turner  
2nd Vice President

Kay Fox  
Financial Secretary/Treasurer

Beth Kenny  
Recording Secretary

Carolyn Glacken  
Trustee

Patti deHarde  
Guide

Update is published by UAW Local 6888, 1205 S. Mission Street, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858 (Ph: 989-773-1312).

Members are invited to contribute letters to the editor, articles, photos, or cartoons. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject any material. Views expressed herein are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UAW, District 1-D, Local 6888's Executive Board, or Bargaining Committee.

This newsletter is "Labor Donated".

Deadline for material submission is the 20th of the month prior to the month of issue. Send all materials to Caral Turner, Warriner 308 or via e-mail to [tume1cj@cmich.edu](mailto:tume1cj@cmich.edu).

**NEXT  
MEMBERSHIP  
MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 17  
LAKE ERIE RM**