



MAGE

Michigan Association of Governmental Employees
OPEIU Local 2002

THE QUARTERLY REPORT

October 2023

Message from the President

A lot has been happening behind the scenes at MAGE this summer as we continue to prepare for the upcoming Coordinated Compensation Meeting this month. Peter Neu, MAGE Labor Representative and Legal Counsel, has been working tirelessly with members to compile written statements from concerned members as well as preparing those members who wished to participate by giving a statement in person. Members in Corrections should have also received a short survey regarding the pay compression issue. We will be using the responses we received to help us in our negotiations. Not only is MAGE advocating for a base wage increase for all NERE's, we will also be advocating for the state to fix the pay compression issues that are plaguing our member in DHS and Corrections.

Over the summer the Civil Service Commission voted unanimously to end the requirement of pre-employment marijuana testing. It is important to know that those applicants who desire to work in areas of employment that are classified as test designated positions are still required to submit to a full drug and alcohol pre-employment test. Examples of test designated position include those in: law enforcement, Corrections, medical related fields, CDL holders and heavy equipment operations.

At the September Board meeting, MAGE was excited to approve payment of four Scholarships awards! The winners of the awards were, Gavin Aldred, Jasmin Heath, Thomas Mobley, and LaKyra Moss. All awardees are children of MAGE members. MAGE wishes all the winners the best of luck on their future endeavors.

Over the course of 6 months from April through September, MAGE ran a membership drive. Over the 6 months MAGE gained 38 new memberships as a result of being referred by an already existing member! Thank you to all who participated in the membership drive! Of the new members who joined during the drive, the winner of the Beats by Dre headphones drawing was Re'Dell Lilly. We did not have any members meet the minimum of 5 recruited members to win an award of a \$100 Gift card. We hope that our current members will continue to spread the word about MAGE membership to their peers to help expand our member base.

I hope everyone has a wonderful fall season and upcoming holiday season!

Labor Representatives in Action

Labor Relations Director John DeTizio again attended new supervisor trainings for the Department of Corrections this quarter to make sure that the new supervisors know what MAGE does and stands for as an organization. If you would like to have a meeting with current members and/or potential members, please contact the MAGE office. He also made many stops at multiple facilities across the state to spread the word about MAGE.

Labor Relations Tip!

Finding the grievance process daunting? MAGE is here to help! A grievance must be filed within 14 calendar days after a grievant knew of the grievance. Officials at the step 1 level must provide an answer to a grievant within 14 days. If no answer is provided, the grievance is deemed to have been denied. If filing a step 2 grievance against the step 1 response, you have 14 calendar days to file. If filing due to no answer being provided, the step 2 must be filed within 21 calendar days. Visit the MAGE webpage for more information on the grievance process.

Benefit Spotlight

Don't forget! MAGE members have access to numerous benefits! This quarter we want to highlight the new college benefit available.

This quarter we are excited to share that OPEIU has announced the new Discount College Benefit! OPEIU has teamed up with two higher education providers to provide a wide range of universities and programs at a discounted rate.

The Discount College Benefit offers up to 50 percent discounted tuition on more than 50 online degree programs and certificate programs. This program ensures accessibility and affordability for higher education for union members. Whether you are looking to obtain a certificate, associate, bachelors, or masters degree, we are sure this program has something to offer you!

More information on the new Discount College Program can be found on the MAGE webpage! You do not want to miss out on this great opportunity!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

HIGHLIGHTS (Provided by MAGE Lobbyist Todd Tennis)

The Michigan Legislature has returned from its summer recess and traditionally would be in session for the rest of the year. This year, however, there are rumors that the Legislature could adjourn for the year as early as November or even late October. The impetus for an early adjournment would be to start the 90 day clock on the effective date of legislation earlier than the usual late December adjournment. This could allow controversial items such as moving up the Presidential Primary to February and various tax reductions to take effect in January or February rather than the usual March or April.

Another reason they might adjourn early is the possibility that two members of the Michigan House could win local mayoral elections in November. Representative Lori Stone (D-Warren) and Representative Kevin Coleman (D-Westland) are both in close races running for mayor of their hometowns. If both win, there would be two vacancies in the Michigan House leading to a 54-54 partisan split. That split would last until a special election could be called which would take several months. It is not expected that the House will accomplish much during that period if both Rep. Stone and Rep. Coleman win their mayoral races.

State Pension Legislation Voted out of Senate Committee

A package of bills aimed at allowing certain state employees to opt into the Michigan State Police Retirement System were reported out of the Senate Labor Committee on September 19. Senate Bills 165-167, sponsored by Senators Cherry (D-Flint), McDonald-Rivet (D-Bay City) and Shink (D-Northfield Twp.) would create an option for certain state employees currently in the defined contribution system (Tier 2) to terminate their membership in that system and join the State Police Retirement System (SPRS). Employees who opt into the SPRS would start with zero credit for years of service, but they would be allowed to purchase years of service credit at an actuarially determined rate.

Per the Senate Fiscal Analysis of the bill, the individuals covered by these bills would include the following:

- Covered positions, which include corrections officers, resident unit officers, corrections medical aides, corrections shift supervisors, corrections security inspectors, corrections security representatives, deputy prison wardens, and departmental administrator-prison wardens.
- Certain positions (delineated by those hired on or after January 1, 1989) with the Center for Forensic Psychiatry.
- Corrections resident representatives, Corrections transportation officers, and special alternative incarceration officer.

- Conservation officers.
- State Police motor carrier troopers or State Police properties securities officers.

The bills are being promoted mainly by the Michigan Corrections Organization, and is focused on state workers who are adjacent to law enforcement roles. MAGE has advocated to expand the legislation to include more workers, but unfortunately those requests have yet been refused.

On a related note, the Coalition for Secure Retirement – an advocacy group that supports public pensions – is working with various state and public-school employee groups to promote reopening defined benefit pension options for state and school workers. As the last few remaining members of the State Employees Retirement System prepare to retire over the next few years, that system is facing growing funding issues as a “dead plan.” When SERS was closed in 1997, it was over 100% funded. Twenty-six years later, it is less than 70% funded.

Closing that system increased costs to the state, while at the same time devastating the retirement security of state workers. This in turn has been a significant contributing factor in current staffing shortages, as more and more workers see state employment as a less attractive option due to limited retirement benefits. Making a defined benefit option available for state workers again will help address the staffing shortage while providing a solid retirement plan for current and future state employees.

Visit the MAGE website for the full legislative report.

Announcements:

- MAGE will be participating in the Coordinated Compensation Proceedings on October 31, 2023. We would like to thank those members who took the time to provide a statement or will be attending in person.
- Would you like a MAGE informational meeting to be held at your office? If you would like to set up a lunch meeting for members and potential members to speak with MAGE Labor Representatives, call the MAGE Office today! 1-800-477-6243.