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183 Retired Macomb County Government Politicians and Bureaucrats are taking Millions in Pensions and Salaries at the same time to do the same job!



A bombshell report lists 183 Retired Macomb County Government Politicians and Public Employees who are taking \$13.4 million in Salaries[1] and \$32.4 Million in pension payments[2] at the same time to do the same job. The report, based on data provided by the county, lists the names, job titles, salaries, and pension cash bonus date of retired “Public Servants” sortable at <https://tripleDippers.org/michigan/> . Five years of pension payments are given to Triple Dippers as a lump sum pension cash bonus when they retire for the **second** time. The highest cash pension bonus is \$503,672 and 150 Triple Dippers take over \$100,000 in cash pension bonuses.

TLDR:

The Macomb County Government’s DROP program allows an employee to Triple Dip, to “retire” and start receiving their pensions AND salaries by continuing to work for five years after “retiring”. At the end of that five-year term, the employee will receive a pension cash bonus payout. Triple Dippers cash out unused vacation, personal and sick leave at their highest salary, not the salary when the unused days were earned, which artificially boosts their final year’s pay which pensions are based on.

Here are the Top 5 Macomb County Triple Dippers:

Last Name	First Name	Job Title	First Retirement Date	Cash Bonus Date	Pension Cash Bonus	Salary
GORNICKI	JEFFERY	LIEUTENANT	03/06/2021	03/05/2026	\$ 503,672	\$ 181,210
LOKAR	KEVIN	MEDICAL DIRECTOR	01/26/2019	01/25/2024	\$ 488,557	\$ 181,866
HARVEY	JORDAN	SARGENT	02/06/2021	02/05/2026	\$ 413,398	\$ 149,897
BRINEY	STEVEN	CAPTAIN	10/05/2019	10/04/2024	\$ 411,714	\$ 119,785
WILLIS	DANIEL	LIEUTENANT	06/01/2019	05/31/2024	\$ 378,164	\$ 123,441

This report includes many egregious details and examples of abuse such as Joanna Strizic. She will get a \$219,095 cash bonus in just a few months after having “retired” Jan 14th, 2017. Another example is Triple Dipping janitor Byron Simmons who will receive a cash bonus of \$118,768 with a salary of \$43,676.

The full report, including extensive citations, is included below and the county provided data can also be found in a searchable and sortable format on the TripleDippers official website: <https://tripleDippers.org/michigan>

For questions and interview opportunities or additional information contact:

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183 Retired Macomb County Government Politicians and Public Employees are taking **\$13.4 million in Salaries¹** and **\$32.4 Million in pension payments²** at the same time to do the same job. Five years of Pension payments are then given to Triple Dippers as a lump sum Pension Cash Bonus when they retire for the **second** time. The highest cash bonus payout in Macomb County is \$503,672 and 150 TripleDippers will rake in over \$100,000 in pension cash bonuses.

“Triple Dippers are ‘Public Servants’ who take a salary with huge benefits and a pension with interest at the same time to do the same job at the same time!”, noted Dave Jaye, Researcher, TripleDippers.org. “No private company allows such abuses. By collecting a paycheck and a pension at the same time, Triple Dippers can afford to delay Social Security **which then increases 8% per year to age 70.**³ **That’s about a 40% increase in Social Security payments!**”

Table: Top 5 Triple Dippers in Macomb County

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Macomb County Triple Dippers participate in a program formally called “Deferred Retirement Option Program” (DROP). They take taxpayers’ money to **collect a paycheck and a pension at the same time to do the same job for five years**. Triple Dippers collect all pay increases, bonuses and promotions during these five years then collect a taxpayer paid pension for life when they retire for the **second** time.

“The Cherry on the top is that Triple Dippers cash out unused vacation, personal and sick leave at their highest salary, not the salary when the unused days were earned, which artificially boosts their final year’s pay which pensions are based on”.

“Replacing these 183 over-the-hill, retired Triple Dippers with freshly educated and trained employees would help 183 people start new careers while saving approximately 40% or \$38 Million which could be spent on roads, Seniors, Veterans, tax cuts and more,” stated Dave Jaye. “This abuse of taxpayers must stop.”

Very powerful Macomb County Politicians are Triple Dippers including Don Brown, Chairman of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners (salary of \$91,800)⁴ Note: The Macomb County Government report of 9-24-21 under reported the salaries of at least one politician which we corrected using State and Macomb Daily source

¹ “Macomb County Government Roster-Employee Gross Wages 2020 9-24-21”

² Macomb County Government Corporation Counsel Office “DROP list 8-30-21”

³ <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/1943-delay.html>

⁴ <https://www.macombdaily.com/2020/03/10/two-percent-pay-increases-suggested-for-elected-macomb-county-officials/>

documents. Macomb County needs to correct the Triple Dipper Pension numbers for any that have been misreported.

The searchable and sortable list of 183 Macomb County Government Triple Dippers is available at: <https://triplepipers.org/michigan/>

These 183 **RETIRED** Macomb County Government Triple Dippers include many non-core mission employees such as warehouse services, cooks, janitors, medical billing specialists, carpenters, security guards, cashiers, therapists and others. There are approximately 35 Macomb County Government Triple Dipper Secretaries! Most private companies use personal computers, not overpaid Secretaries.⁵ These non-core positions should be contracted out to private businesses to save millions in taxpayers money.

Taxpayer abuse examples:

Joanna Strizic is a Triple Dipper Queen. She will collect a \$219,095 cash bonus just a few months from now after having “retired” Jan 14th, 2017

Macomb County Cashier Brenda Musialowski makes \$42,433 salary plus a pension cash bonus of \$82,943 and Cashier Lori Ferdig makes \$49,410 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$105,992. Kroger Cashiers make an average \$10.40 per hour or \$22,713 a year⁶.

Macomb County Government Warehouse Services Assistant Angela Stempnik makes a \$48,276 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$106,349. UPS Warehouse Assistants make an average of \$14 an hour or \$29,120 a year⁷.

Macomb County Government carpenter James Schilkey makes a **\$75,186 salary** plus a **cash pension bonus of \$118,061**. He’ll get that on 1/11/24. Do Macomb County Politicians really need a highly paid carpenter to make frames for political tributes? A carpenter in Warren, Michigan makes an average salary of \$58,904 *with no pension cash bonus*.

Another Triple Dipper, Larry Ball, has a **cash pension bonus of \$214, 240** scheduled for collection 8/21/2025. *For all too many Macomb County residents, the word collection means something else entirely.*

Approximately 35 Macomb County Government Secretaries are taking \$1.7 million in salaries and \$3.8 Million in cash pension bonuses at the same time to do the same job! Most private companies use personal computers, not overpaid Secretaries.

A Triple Dipper employee needing more explanation from Macomb County Government is Andrew Wozniak. This Triple Dipper is reported be collecting a pension cash bonus of \$155,155 on 12/27/2023. Macomb Government Officials need to provide an explanation for why this person’s details were omitted from the County provided wage list.

Outrageously, **several teachers are Macomb County Government Trippers!** The Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center School is one of four High Schools in the L’Anse Creuse Public School District⁸. A new 10-year, 1.9-mill “enhancement tax millage” for Macomb County public schools was approved on March 10, 2020, generating an estimated \$55 Million in 2020.⁹ The Macomb Intermediate School District and L’Anse Creuse School District should provide any necessary teachers and “Teacher Aides” for Macomb County Government instead of taxing Homeowners three times for juvenile teacher services. Are there valid reasons for such hefty bonuses, or are they just friends of Powerful Macomb County Politicians?

⁵ <https://job-outlook.careerplanner.com/Secretaries-and-Administrative-Assistants.cfm>

⁶ https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Cashier/Hourly_Rate/9b7eed77/The-Kroger-Company

⁷ https://www.glassdoor.com/Salaries/michigan-ups-package-handler-salary-SRCH_IL.0,8_IS527_KO9,28.htm

⁸ <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/michigan/districts/lanse-creuse-public-schools/macomb-county-juvenile-justice-center-school-92007>

⁹ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2020/03/10/michigan-primary-election-results-voters-yes-tax-schools-macomb-county/4933782002/>

Three Unknowns with hefty future Pension Cash Bonuses (job and wage information omitted by county)

Michael Bucholtz: **\$276,420 cash pension bonus** 1/12/23

Mark Nummer: **\$212,987 cash pension bonus** 11/27/25

Ralph Impemba: **\$124,726 cash pension bonus** 12/27/24

Triple Dipping Macomb Janitor Byron Simmons takes a salary of \$43,676 and a pension bonus of \$118,768 at the same time to do the same job. The average Macomb County Janitor salary is \$33,072¹⁰.

Macomb Government employee Kelly Rhymes is another Triple Dipper who's information was partially omitted by the County. In a few years, she will collect a **pension cash bonus of \$94,541** on 7/26/2024. In the meantime, she is still working after "retiring" 7/27/2019 and getting a salary, vacation days and possibly lots more.

Macomb County Triple Dippers include Politicians charged with political corruption¹¹.



Ex-Macomb County Prosecutor **Eric Smith was a Macomb County Triple Dipper¹²** with a salary over \$152,821¹³ and was on track to take (approximately) a \$746,105 pension cash bonus! Eric Smith was charged in state court with 10 felonies including embezzlement of \$600,000 in taxpayer money from drug and forfeiture funds¹⁴. Eric Smith agreed to plead **guilty to the obstruction of justice charge**, for trying to cover up stealing \$70,000 from his campaign account with the sentencing guidelines of 15 months to 21 months in prison, per a plea agreement with the federal government.¹⁵



Ex-Macomb Chief Assistant Prosecutor Ben Liston entered the Macomb County Government Triple Dipper (DROP) program in 2013 and retired in 2018 with a salary over \$122,427 **and took a cash bonus of approximately \$612,135¹⁶** Ben Liston was charged with four Felony charges and Liston plead guilty to three misdemeanor charges of stealing Taxpayer money to pay for personal laptops, travel expenses to his Arizona residence and sound equipment.¹⁷ It appears Ben Liston may be able to avoid having his approximately \$48,720 annual Macomb County pension forfeited because Ben Liston recently plead guilty to three misdemeanor counts for Ben Liston's role in Eric Smith's alleged

¹⁰ <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Macomb-County,-Mi/salaries/Custodian>

¹¹ <https://www.macombdaily.com/2020/10/18/former-macomb-county-employees-charged-with-crimes-may-forfeit-pensions/>

¹² <https://www.macombdaily.com/2020/04/05/eric-smith-could-be-compiling-cash-to-fight-criminal-charges/>

¹³ <https://openpayrolls.com/eric-j-smith-65517163>

¹⁴ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2021/07/09/ex-macomb-prosecutor-eric-smith-faces-hearing-embezzlement-case/7911098002/>

¹⁵ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2021/07/09/ex-macomb-prosecutor-eric-smith-faces-hearing-embezzlement-case/7911098002/>

¹⁶ <https://govsalaries.com/liston-benjamin-f-29512059>

¹⁷ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2020/09/17/former-chief-assistant-prosecutor-benjamin-liston-pleads-guilty/3480770001/>

scheme to steal \$600,000 of taxpayer money. That would make forfeiture of Ben Liston's County Pension an optional pursuit of the Macomb County Retirement Board.

"We need to create opportunities for young people to move into these jobs to buy a home and start a family replacing these overpriced, Golden Oldie Triple Dipper Turkeys who are stuffing themselves with millions in taxpayer paid cash bonuses. Young people have much lower health care costs, are better educated and have much more energy than these Senior Citizen Triple Dippers," noted Dave Jaye.

"Triple Dippers are greedy. How many cars, luxury vacation homes and fancy meals do Triple Dippers really need? Triple Dippers are taking salaries with huge benefits and interest-bearing pensions at the same time to do the same jobs while living next to neighbors who lost their job or businesses, retirement savings, children's college savings funds and possibly their cars and homes", said Dave Jaye. "I wonder how many, if any, of Macomb County's 183 "Public Servant" Triple Dippers will promise, in writing to give some of the taxpayer paid cash bonuses to charity?"

Is Triple Dipping Legal? Unfortunately, yes.

Is Triple Dipping Ethical? No. Enriching yourself with a paycheck and pension at the same time to do the same job using taxpayer money is not Ethical.

Is Triple Dipping Moral? No. Triple Dippers are committing one of the Seven Deadly sins: **Gluttony**¹⁸



Gluttony (Latin: *gula*) is the overindulgence and over consumption of anything to the point of waste. The word derives from the Latin *gluttire*, to gulp down or swallow. Gorging on taxpayer money by rich politicians and bureaucrats leaves the needy hungry.

Do Triple Dippers meet our community standards of conservative, blue collar, hardworking, Macomb County? No. The percentage of workers in the private sector whose only retirement account is a defined benefit pension plan is now 4%, down from 60% in the early 1980s.¹⁹

"Triple Dipping at the expense of taxpayers is not representative of our values, nor the values of most of Macomb County workers and taxpayers," noted Dave Jaye. "The Macomb County Commissioners, led by Chairman and Triple Dipper Don Brown and the County Executive Mark Hackel should immediately adopt new county ordinances to: prohibit any future politicians and bureaucrats from becoming Triple Dippers, require that politicians and bureaucrats convicted of misdemeanors stealing taxpayer dollars or using their public office to enrich themselves **shall lose their County pension** and that unused days off must be cashed out at the salary the unused days were earned, not the highest final salary so as to avoid artificially inflating pensions. Ending the Macomb County Triple Dipper Program would **save approximately \$37.7 million** and create 183 new opportunities for Macomb County residents".

<https://boc.macombgov.org/boc-Commissioners>
<https://executive.macombgov.org/executive-home>

(Permission granted to republish all or part of this report if the Author and website <https://tripledippers.org/michigan/> are cited).

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¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins

¹⁹

https://money.cnn.com/retirement/guide/pensions_basics.moneymag/index7.htm#:~:text=The%20percentage%20of%20workers%20in,a%20combination%20of%20both%20types.