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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. These Macomb County Government “Public Servants” also don’t pay 3% of their salary (\$405,328) into the County Pension program like every other County Worker. As a Cherry on the top, these Triple Dippers cash-out unused days off at their final highest salary, not the salary when days off were earned, taking more money from taxpayers, and artificially inflating last year’s salary upon what pensions are based. The report, based on data provided by Macomb County, lists the names, job titles, salaries, and pension cash bonus date of retired “Public Servants” sortable at <https://tripleddippers.org/michigan/>. Triple Dippers take Five years of taxpayer paid pension payments as a lump sum pension cash bonus when they retire for the second time. The highest cash pension bonus is \$503,872 and 150 “Public Servants” take over \$100,000.

TLDR:

To summarize, Macomb County Government’s DROP program allows an employee to Triple Dip, to “retire” and start receiving their pensions AND salaries by continuing working for five years. 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

The report includes many egregious details and examples of abuse such as Teacher Aide Michael Bucholtz, who makes a \$12,986 salary and will get a \$276,420 cash bonus. Another appalling example is Andrew Wozniak, a part time van driver reported to be collecting a pension and who will receive a cash bonus of \$155,155, all while making a salary of only \$1,516!

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 Triple Dippers official website: <https://tripleddippers.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. Triple Dippers take five years of taxpayer paid pension payments as a lump sum Pension Cash Bonus when they retire for the **second** time. The highest cash bonus payout in Macomb County is \$503,872 and 150 Triple Dippers will rake in over \$100,000.

“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. 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 taxpayers’ paid pension for life when they retire for the **second time**. Triple dippers don’t pay 3% of their salary into the Macomb County Pension program, approximately

“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.”

Some powerful Macomb County Politicians are Triple Dippers including Don Brown, Chairman of the Macomb County Board of Commissioners (salary of \$91,800),⁴ .

Criminals Ex-Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith was a Macomb County Triple Dipper, salary over \$152,821 and \$82,800 a year pension and was on track to take approximately a \$746,105 pension cash bonus! Triple Dipper Eric Smith Takes \$116,000 Cash Pension bonus on Feb. 29, 2020, less than a month before he was charged by Attorney General Nessel and nearly 11 months after the FBI began investigating him. Criminal Triple Dipper Eric Smith was sentenced to 21 months in Prison fined \$20,000 and must pay \$70,000 restitution. Additionally, Eric Smith was charged in state court with 10 felonies stealing \$600,000 of taxpayer money. Why was Triple Dipper Eric Smith, now 53 allowed to become a join the DROP Retirement system at age 50? Judge Freezes Eric Smith’s \$82,800 a year

Pension 3-14-22.

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 pension cash bonus of approximately \$612,135. Ben Liston was charged with official misconduct in office, a five-year felony; conducting a criminal enterprise, a 20-year felony; and two counts of embezzlement by a public official, a 10-year felony. Ben Liston signed a plea agreement on September 17, 2020 to spend 60 days in the Macomb County Jail, lost his law license and pay restitution \$16,000—but Ben Liston still is taking \$48,720 a year taxpayer paid pension! Why haven't the Macomb Board of Commissioners and Executive acted to eliminate taxpayer paid pensions of Corrupt Macomb County Public Officers?

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/>

⁵ https://www.senate.michigan.gov/SFA/Chart/2021/Chart-Michigan_Judicial_Salaries-032221.pdf

Note: The Macomb County Government report of 9-24-21 under reported the salaries of these politicians which we corrected with State and Macomb Daily source documents. Macomb County government answered several 2021 Freedom of Information requests with 2020 salary data. Corporation Council John Schapka's claims that the 2021 Macomb County Government Workers annual salary data won't be available until late January or February 2022 defies State and Federal payroll tax laws. Macomb County government, like any other Michigan employer must pay State and Federal income taxes, social security and Medicare tax and pension payments based on the most current salary every two week period the salary and wages were earned.

The fully sortable list of 183 Macomb County Government Triple Dippers is available at:

<https://tripleedippers.org/michigan/>

These 183 **RETIRED** Macomb County Government Triple Dippers include many non-core mission employees including a warehouse services assistant, a cook, a janitor, 3 medical billing specialists, 2 carpenters, a security guard, 2 cashiers, 5 therapists, and incredibly a part time van driver! There are 35 Macomb County Government Triple Dippers Secretaries! Most private companies use personal computers, not overpaid Secretaries.⁶ These non-core positions should be contracted out to private businesses to save millions in taxpayers money.

Taxpayer abuse examples:

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 year⁷.

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 year⁸.

Macomb County Government carpenters James Schilkey makes \$75,186 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$118,061 and Larry Ball makes a \$67,596 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$214,240. Do Macomb County Politicians really need 2 carpenters to make frames for political tributes? A carpenter in Warren, Michigan makes \$58,904⁹ average salary.

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! Joanna Strizic is the Triple Dipper Secretary Queen and is collecting a \$43,406 Salary. She will receive a pension cash bonus of \$219,095 after her five-year post-retirement period ends. Most private companies use personal computers, not overpaid Secretaries.

A Triple Dipper employee needing more explanation from Macomb County Government is Andrew Wozniak, part time van driver reported as collecting a pension cash bonus of \$155,155 with an annual salary of \$1,516!?! Macomb Government Officials need to provide an explanation for this excessive salary and bonus. Why wouldn't UPS or Fed Ex be a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Outrageously, **3 Teacher Aides and 4 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 District¹⁰. 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 2020.¹¹ 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. Do these Triple Dipping "Teacher Aides" even have a teaching license and/or bachelor's and advanced degrees, or are they just friends of Powerful Macomb County Politicians?

Teacher Aides:

Michael Bucholtz makes a \$12,986 salary and will get a \$276,420 pension cash bonus

Mark Nummer makes a \$19,435 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$212,987

⁶ <https://job-outlook.careerplanner.com/Secretaries-and-Administrative-Assistants.cfm>

⁷ https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Cashier/Hourly_Rate/9b7eed77/The-Kroger-Company

⁸ https://www.glassdoor.com/Salaries/michigan-ups-package-handler-salary-SRCH_IL0,8_IS527_KO9,28.htm

⁹ <https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/carpenter-ii-salary/warren-mi>

¹⁰ <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/michigan/districts/lanse-creuse-public-schools/macomb-county->

[juvenile-justice-center-school-92007](#)

¹¹ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macoomb/2020/03/10/michgan-primary-election-results-voters-yes-tax-schools-macomb-county/4933782002/>

Ralph Impemba makes a \$19,650 salary and will receive a pension cash bonus of \$124,726

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 \$33,072¹².

Macomb Government Cook (Nutrition Supervisor) Kelly Rhymes is a Triple Dipper taking a salary of \$80,043 and a pension cash bonus of \$94,541 at the same time! Wouldn't a private catered food services would be significantly lower in cost?

Macomb County Triple Dippers include Politicians charged with political corruption¹³.



(Former Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, Triple Dipper)

Ex-Macomb County Prosecutor **Eric Smith was a Macomb County Triple Dipper**¹⁴ with a salary over \$152,821¹⁵ 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 funds¹⁶. 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.¹⁷



(Former Macomb Chief Assistant Prosecutor Ben Liston, Triple Dipper)

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 \$612,135¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 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.

¹² <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Macomb-County,-Mi/salaries/Custodian>

¹³ <https://www.macombdaily.com/2020/10/18/former-macomb-county-employees-charged-with-crimes-may-forfeit-pensions/>

¹⁴ <https://www.macombdaily.com/2020/04/05/eric-smith-could-be-compiling-cash-to-fight-criminal-charges/>

¹⁵ <https://openpayrolls.com/eric-j-smith-65517163>

¹⁶ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2021/07/09/ex-macomb-prosecutor-eric-smith-faces-hearing-embezzlement-case/7911098002/>

¹⁷ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2021/07/09/ex-macomb-prosecutor-eric-smith-faces-hearing-embezzlement-case/7911098002/>

¹⁸ <https://govsalaries.com/liston-benjamin-f-29512059>

¹⁹ <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2020/09/17/former-chief-assistant-prosecutor-benjamin-liston-pleads-guilty/3480770001/>

“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**²⁰



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.

Does 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.²¹

“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 and not at artificially inflated 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>

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²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_deadly_sins

²¹

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