

Today

MEA-MFT

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Newsletter for MEA-MFT Members in Montana Public K-12 Schools, Higher Education, State & Local Government, Head Start, & Health Care



AFMSU presidents Kari Cargill (left) and Sandy Osborne on the MSU-Bozeman campus after the Board of Regents' approval of MSU's first collective bargaining agreements.

MSU-Bozeman faculty members ratify historic first contracts

'Swapt with a sense of gratitude." That's how MEA-MFT member Sandy Osborne felt as faculty votes were tallied October 28, resulting in the historic ratification of Montana State University-Bozeman's first-ever collective bargaining agreements.

Osborne, a professor of family and consumer sciences and president of the Associated Faculty of MSU (AFMSU) tenure track faculty union, said, "I feel so grateful to everyone who helped us get here: our organizing team, all the staff and leaders at MEA-MFT, folks from other MEA-MFT faculty unions who came down and helped us, the members who wrote our constitution; our bargaining teams. They all helped us toward this win."

"This is a big day," said MEA-MFT

Field Consultant Tom Burgess, who helped AFMSU develop and negotiate the agreements. "MSU faculty first tried to form a union nearly 30 years ago. The folks involved back then would be proud to see this day. Our current faculty union leaders have secured an agreement that culminates an effort that began so long ago."

MSU faculty voted to unionize in 2009, becoming the final campus in the Montana University System to form a faculty union and affiliate with MEA-MFT.

AFMSU represents about 400 tenure track and 200 nontenure track faculty at MSU. Two separate collective bargaining agreements were negotiated over 19 months between union members and MSU management: one for tenure track (Continued on p. 5)

Huge victories for public employees in Ohio & elsewhere

The tsunami of anti-public employee, right-wing politicians that swept into power in many states in the 2010 elections met with a wall of grassroots resistance in this year's election.

November 8, 2011 saw historic victories for public employees, the middle class, and working families across the nation. From Maine to North Carolina, Ohio to Kentucky, voters rejected politicians who tried to exploit a tough economy to scapegoat public employees and collective bargaining rights.

Ohio: One of the most closely watched elections took place in Ohio, where voters reclaimed the rights of working people. In a landslide victory, (Continued on p. 7)



Ohioan Kristin Sutton celebrates after hearing voters had repealed the law gutting public employees' bargaining rights in the Nov. 8 election. NEA photo

Our history: not to be forgotten

BY ERIC FEAVER
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT



‘If any one of the nine Republican candidates for governor is elected and the next legislature looks like the last, we are in for furious battles over public school privatization, tenure, retirement, and the right to organize and bargain collectively.’

As we struggle with Tea Party/Republican assaults on our union and what we do, it is imperative that we take a moment, step back in time, reconnect with, and honor our past.

Come the New Year, we will be 130 years old! Our frontier founders created the Territorial Teachers Association seven years before statehood. They believed as we believe today that public education makes all things better and must be a primary purpose of good government.

In 1924, we located our state office in Helena, employed an executive director, and named ourselves the Montana Education Association. In 2000, we merged AFT and NEA state affiliates and became MEA-MFT.

For 40 years, we have enlarged and diversified our membership, an ongoing endeavor. Throughout we have remained true to our mission: to serve our members, work communities, and state and provide all Montanans quality PUBLIC programs and services.

Now we must remind ourselves that what we did years ago still resonates today, or put another way, what we have done lately we may have actually done a long time ago. For example:

In 1913, at our behest, the Montana State Legislature established teacher tenure. Nearly 100 years ago, legislators correctly decided that teachers deserved what they demanded then and have demanded ever since: just cause and due process. When folks tell me—occasionally teachers—that we don’t need tenure, one thing is for sure: no one today in Montana has ever stood before a classroom or served on a school board without it. Meanwhile tenure critics cavalierly discard the due process amendments to our tenure statutes we helped them make in the 1997 legislature...and cynically ignore that teacher performance is not about tenure but preparation, professional development, supervision, mentorship, and evaluation.

In 1917, the University Faculty Association became the first AFT affiliate in Montana. Today, faculties at every Montana public higher education institution are MEA-MFT. No other NEA or AFT state affiliate can make this celebratory claim.

In 1935, the Butte Teachers Union negotiated

the first public employee labor agreement in American history! Forty years before the Montana Legislature empowered public employees and k-12 school teachers to organize for collective bargaining purposes. Collective bargaining is what we do in this state. Dare we give this up to look like Wisconsin or worse join Idaho in its demented plunge to the bottom of educational common sense and employee rights?

Seventy-five years ago, MEA and the BTU convinced the legislature that after classroom careers at modest pay, teachers had earned a guaranteed annual pension to help see them through their retirement years. Hence the Teachers Retirement System, in which the legislature mandated all teachers be enrolled. In 1945, the legislature established a similar defined benefit pension system for public employees generally.

In concert with others concerned about the sanctity of our retirement systems, we pushed through the 1993 legislature and the 1994 election a constitutional amendment that requires our defined benefit retirement systems be actuarially funded.

In 1997 and 1999, we worked with two different legislatures to establish inflationary increases in public employee and teacher pensions so that the first retirement check a retiree receives would no longer be the best.

For sure, economic changes have come with blunt force and discolored political speech with pension envy. But we must address our retirement systems’ unfunded liabilities. In so doing, however, we will not surrender to insecure private savings accounts that defy the definition of a pension.

For more history, visit www.mea-mft.org/Uploads/files/Downloads/History.pdf.

Then read this admonition:

If any one of the nine Republican candidates for governor is elected and the next legislature looks like the last, we are in for furious battles over public school privatization, tenure, retirement, and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

Ready to kick our history to the curb?

I’m not. ■



Your voice, your union: MEA-MFT Committee Weekend

A tone of urgency and excitement marked this year's MEA-MFT Committee Weekend. The event took place December 3-4 in Helena. About 150 MEA-MFT members from around the state gathered for the event. Topping the agenda was discussion of mobilizing MEA-MFT members to help pro-education, pro-public service candidates in the 2012 elections.

Committee Weekend plays a key role in MEA-MFT's member-driven democracy. Each year, members meet to analyze MEA-MFT's policies, constitution, resolutions, legislative program, and challenges. Standing committees and program and policy councils (PPCs), representing each of MEA-MFT's different membership types, make recommendations to the MEA-MFT board. The board carries these recommendations to the annual MEA-MFT Representative Assembly.

This year's participants raised over \$600 for MEA-MFT Committee On Political Education (COPE). COPE donations are voluntary and go to support MEA-MFT's political action program. "Our members get it," said MEA-MFT Executive Director Erik Burke. "They know the importance of the 2012 elections, and they are ready to make a difference."

Committee members heard from State Attorney General Steve Bullock, a candidate for governor; and Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau, who is running for re-election. Both officials thanked MEA-MFT for its past support and talked about the challenges facing public employees and educators.

Steve Bullock told a story about talking with his legal assistants (who make half of what they could earn in the private sector) during the legislative session. After the state pay plan increase was defeated, they asked him, "Why does the legislative majority hate state employees?"

Bullock noted that thousands fewer Montanans voted in 2010, a trend that has to be reversed. "That election didn't change our values," he said. "We still want to educate our kids, and have clean and quiet places to hike and fish. We need to invest in the public employees who serve every corner of our state. You need a supportive gov-

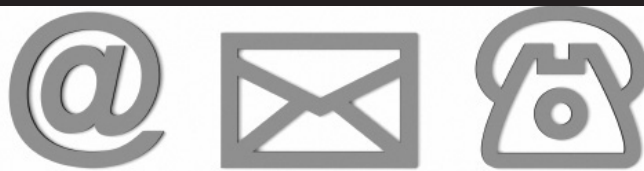


ernment, tools, and resources to do that work."

"You are my friends, colleagues, and heroes," Denise Juneau told Committee Weekend participants. She talked about Montana's public schools, some of the best in the nation, and about her success in pushing back on No Child Left Behind.

"I'm proud to be a member of MEA-MFT," Juneau said. "Our values are Montana's values. We believe in helping our neighbors in tough times. We support strong schools, and we know school reform has to be done *with* our teachers (Continued on p. 14)

Members of MEA-MFT's state employee and Head Start program and policy council gather during Committee Weekend.

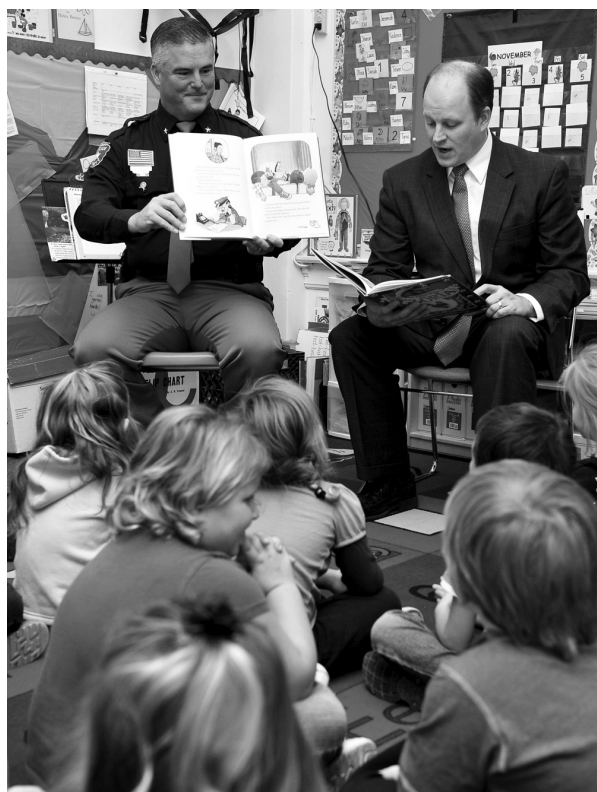


ALERT! Has your contact info changed?

Got a new mailing/e-mail address or phone number? Please let us know! We don't want you to miss out on important information and offerings from your union. You can change your information online at www.mea-mft.org under Member-ship Center. Or contact Jolene Devine with your new contact information: 442.4250, 800.398.0826, or jdevine@mea-mft.org. **Thank you!**

Head Start makes headlines

‘There is a growing realization among business and policy leaders that Head Start works. Spread the word!’



Montana policy leaders who get it: Cascade County Sheriff Bob Edwards and County Attorney John Parker visit Great Falls Head Start. Rion Sanders photo, Great Falls Tribune 11/8/11

As Congress wrestles with budget decisions, MEA-MFT and our national affiliates are working hard to make sure congressional delegates get the message that Head Start *works* and deserves adequate funding.

Fortunately, according to the National Head Start Association (NHSA), “There is a growing realization among business leaders and policy makers that investment in early childhood education is key to the future success of our nation.”

NHSA, a nonprofit group that advocates for Head Start, says there is more understanding of the importance of character development in the first five years of life and a greater appreciation of the long-term benefits to society from investing in Head Start programs.

NHSA cites the following national news stories about Head Start (*excerpted and edited by permission from the NHSA Research Digest*):

“Occupy the Classroom,” by Nicholas Kristof for the *New York Times*. Kristof cites James Heckman, a Nobel Prize-winning econo-

mist who has shown that investments in early childhood education not only pay for themselves, they pay a return of 7 percent or more—better than many investments on Wall Street.

Kristof also cites research by Harvard professor David Deming, showing that Head Start has a significant long-term impact on children. Former Head Start participants are much less likely to repeat grades, be diagnosed with a learning disability, or suffer the kind of poor health associated with poverty. Head Start alumni are more likely

than their siblings to graduate from high school and attend college.

“The Harrisburg Preschool Program Evaluation: Final Report,” by Mark T. Greenberg & Celene E. Domitrovich of the Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University. The report finds that the benefits of early childhood education do not wash out or fade out, as some claim, and that there are significant benefits to having two years of Head Start instead of one.

“From Kindergarten to College Completion,” by Judith Scott-Clayton for the *New York Times Economic Blog*. Scott-Clayton, a professor at Columbia University, makes the case that it’s critical to start with the very youngest children and give them a good foundation. She also responds to the charges of fade-out by pointing to Head Start’s long-term benefits.

And right here in Montana, an article in the *Great Falls Tribune* reports: “The trick to decreasing crime rates lies in the hands of early childhood classrooms such as the federally-funded Head Start program, according to local law enforcement officials.” (“Edwards, Parker invest in students at Great Falls Head Start program,” by Kristen Cates, 11/8/11.)

The article talks about Cascade County Sheriff Bob Edwards and County Attorney John Parker, who joined with the action agency Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Montana to urge Congress not to cut discretionary funding for Head Start as it shapes a deficit-reduction plan.

“I believe in tough law enforcement, but we need to support and establish prevention programs,” said Edwards, a former Head Start student himself. “We need to take these at-risk kids and set them on a positive path. It makes for good public safety.”

The article says 75 percent of the men imprisoned in the U.S. don’t have a high school diploma. It quotes Parker as saying education is a public safety issue. “I’m talking about the crimes that won’t be committed,” he said. “Keeping kids out of the system before they get in is the smartest decision we can make.”

You’ll find links to the complete articles at www.mea-mft.org. Click on Head Start News. ■

Historic first contracts at MSU (from p. 1)

faculty and one for non-tenure track faculty. Both agreements were ratified by overwhelming margins in the October vote.

“Holding our breath”: Kari Cargill, professor of microbiology and president of the non-tenure track faculty union, observed the historic vote count along with Osborne. “We were kind of holding our breath as the votes came in,” she said. “When we heard we had close to 86 percent of eligible members voting, we knew it was a great representation of our members.”

At final tally, the overwhelming majority of members voted for the contracts. “It’s a real sign of solidarity and unity,” Cargill said.

While the agreements deal with compensation issues such as salary and benefits, they also give faculty a voice in issues such as workloads, academic freedom, and intellectual property. “Having a strong voice is what a union is all about,” Cargill said. “It allows us to work with management on a higher level. That’s good for MSU, it’s good for faculty, and it’s good for our students.”

“These agreements reflect the hard work of all our members,” Osborne said. “They filled

out surveys and gave feedback to the bargaining teams throughout the process. The teams listened and steered the ship based on the information our members provided. Members set the course.”

Approved by Board of Regents: The Montana Board of Regents unanimously approved the collective bargaining agreements at its November 18 meeting in Bozeman.

“This is a national model of how a union can work together for the benefit of its members and work collaboratively with the administration of the university and the University System,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

The next step for AFMSU, according to Cargill, is to implement the new contracts. Congratulations to all our members at AFMSU!

Bargaining team members for AFMSU included the following: Tenure Track Bargaining Team: Kristen Intemann, history and philosophy; Sandy Osborne, family and consumer sciences; Aleks Rebane, physics; Bok Sowell, animal and range sciences. Non-Tenure Track Bargaining Team: Kari Cargill, microbiology; Jess Carroll, English; Chere LeClair, architecture; Karen Leech, music (retired); Colin Shaw, earth sciences; Dan Wise, film and photography. ■

‘Having a strong voice is what a union is all about. It allows us to work with management on a higher level. That’s good for MSU, it’s good for faculty, and it’s good for our students.’

Kari Cargill

MSU grad assistants move closer to forming union

While faculty union members at Montana State University-Bozeman were celebrating their first contracts, graduate assistants at MSU had a victory of their own to celebrate.

The assistants moved a step closer to joining the MEA-MFT family when the Montana Board of Personnel Appeals (BOPA) declared November 18 that they are, indeed, employees under Montana law. The ruling makes them eligible to form a union and collectively bargain.

“This is a precedent-setting case nationally. It’s exciting,” said MEA-MFT Director of Organizing Melissa Case, who has worked with the grads along with AFT staffer Morgan Smith.

“These teaching and research assistants are the economic future of our state and our country, and a significant economic benefit to MSU. They’re doing cutting edge work. One of them is helping develop a Norovirus vaccine. Their ability to negotiate their working conditions and

benefits will only make them more productive and capable of participating in our economy.”

The grads’ saga began last year, when several graduate assistants from the science departments at MSU approached MEA-MFT about creating a union. With MEA-MFT’s help, they formed an organizing committee and became the Graduate Employee Organization/MEA-MFT (GEO).

MSU administration claimed the graduate assistants were not technically employees and therefore did not have the right to collectively bargain. A hearings officer at the Montana Dept. of Labor ruled in favor of the graduate assistants. MSU’s administration appealed to BOPA, which upheld the earlier ruling November 18.

Case predicts the grads will vote on forming a union this academic year. GEO held a mock election earlier in November, with an overwhelming majority of graduate students voting in favor of having a union and affiliating with MEA-MFT. ■

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Against all odds: fighting for state employees

MEA-MFT has been working every angle to help state employees, such as negotiating a one-year freeze in state employees' out-of-pocket health insurance costs.

When the 2011 Montana Legislature froze state employee base salaries by failing to pass the state pay plan (House Bill 13), MEA-MFT began plowing new ground, exploring every means (and inventing some new ones) to help our state employee members weather the storm.

First, MEA-MFT and our fellow unions, AF-SCME and MPEA, took the historic step of filing an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge in May. The ULP charges that the state failed to bargain in good faith when the legislature delayed action on HB 13 until the end of the legislative session.

When the state Board of Personnel Appeals (BOPA) dismissed the ULP in September, MEA-MFT and our fellow unions appealed. A hearing on the appeal is set for December 15.

"Our ULP is not frivolous or capricious," said Feaver. "It's very serious work that we hope will provide good results sooner or later for all state employees."

Feaver continued, "We make no promises. If this approach doesn't work, our biggest concern is that state employees don't have real collective bargaining rights with the State of Montana. If we can't bargain to a ratified deal, it will make state employees unique among all other unionized employees in Montana.

"**One way or another**, we have to make a deal or change the process. If the next legislature follows suit and refuses to ratify the pay plan, the only recourse we will have is a job action."

In the meantime, MEA-MFT has been working other new angles to help state employees. In August, we negotiated a one-year freeze in state employees' out-of-pocket health insurance costs. On average, the agreement will save each state employee over \$400 in projected health insurance cost increases.

MEA-MFT has also been working with our local bargaining teams at individual state agencies. "We've made good progress in contracts for our members in Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Dept. of Revenue," Feaver said. Contracts for members in the departments of Public Health and Human Services, Corrections, and the Historical Society are still in play; MEA-MFT hopes to settle those shortly.

MEA-MFT and our fellow unions have also officially demanded to bargain a new pay plan with the governor's office. This could precipitate a special legislative session.

"**The bottom line** is that state employees, the folks who do work that matters, cannot afford another legislature like the one we just suffered," Feaver said. "We need to elect people in 2012 who understand the important work our members do and how it contributes to Montana's economy and the well-being of our citizens. (Read more about MEA-MFT's efforts in this regard on page 12.)

From our ULP appeal

The following language, written by Karl Englund, attorney for the unions, describes our appeal in a nutshell:

"Thus, the facts which bring us to the Board because they form the background to this case are that the State (represented by the executive) and the Unions negotiated face-to-face over the course of about a year, they arrived at a tentative agreement when the Unions accepted an offer made by the State, that tentative agreement was submitted to the union members who ratified it and then that agreement was submitted to the Legislature, which waited a full month to hold a hearing, then waited almost two more months before there was a committee vote on

(Continued on p. 14)

MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver explains the unions' ULP charge at a news conference after filing the ULP in May.



Victories in Ohio & elsewhere

(from p. 1)

Ohioans repealed Republican Governor Kasich's Senate Bill 5, which sharply reduced the collective bargaining rights of firefighters, teachers, nurses, and other public employees. Ohioans of all political persuasions —Independents, Democrats, and Republicans alike—sent a message that is still reverberating across the nation: "We don't turn our backs on the public employees who watch ours."

Backstory: Ohio's legislature rammed SB 5 through in late March this year, ignoring public opposition and rallies that brought thousands to the state capitol.

Ohio citizens immediately began a massive grassroots mobilization to repeal the law, forming "We Are Ohio," a nonpartisan citizens' coalition. Thousands of volunteers collected more than a million signatures in just a few weeks to put the SB 5 repeal on the Nov. 8 ballot. Then they pounded the pavement, knocked on doors, made phone calls, and distributed literature around the state right up to Election Day.

Supporters of gutting public employees' rights, meanwhile, turned to out-of-state money from right-wing groups, including billionaires Charles and David Koch, to fight the repeal. But their efforts could not stand up to the majority who support working people, public employees, and the middle class.

"They (SB 5 supporters) said this was about the budget, but it was never about the budget," said Ohio teacher Courtney Johnson. "This was about taking away the rights of middle class Ohioans."

Ohio voters repealed SB 5 by a resounding 61 percent to 39 percent margin. "Ohio voters know that if Tea Party politicians kill labor unions, they will kill what remains of the middle class," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

"Our national affiliates, NEA and AFT, played a huge role in this victory, along with their Ohio members," he added. "They ran an aggressive door-to-door ground game, delivering the message that labor unions are good for Ohio and good for America. Labor unions stand for competitive salaries and benefits. They promote qual-

ity work and safe working conditions. Labor unions grow the economy. And public employees—from the cop on the beat to the teacher in the classroom—are essential to communities."

Victories elsewhere:

- **Kentucky** voters defeated a clone of Scott Walker (Wisconsin's notorious anti-union governor), re-electing a pro-public service, pro-public education governor.
- **Michigan** voters made history by recalling state Senator Paul Scott, chair of the Michigan House Education Committee. The recall was triggered by anger over Scott's cuts to education funding and attacks on public employees' pensions and health care.

- In **Wake County North Carolina**, pro-public education candidates took back the school board, which has been under Tea Party control for two years due to heavy spending in previous elections by Art Pope, a wealthy backer of right-wing causes and close ally of the Koch brothers.

- **Maine** voters repealed a voter-repression law and restored Maine's 40-year policy of allowing voters to register on Election Day.

- **Iowa** voters kept pro-worker legislators in charge of the state legislature, turning back challenges from Tea Party candidates.

These decisive votes "should be a wakeup call for politicians who go too far," said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel.

"The citizens' actions in Ohio and elsewhere show that the public understands that America's economic crisis was not caused by the salaries and benefits earned by hard-working people who serve the public, but by greed and recklessness at the top of the economic ladder," said AFT (Continued on p. 14)



Above: Ohio Education Assoc. President Patricia Frost-Brooks (center) and NEA member Courtney Johnson react to the news of victory on election night. NEA photo
Below: AFT members and others in Ohio celebrate. AFT photo

This just in: Victory in New Hampshire

As MEA-MFT Today goes to press, we have just learned about another major victory for workers' rights: After an 11-month fight, a coalition of labor (including AFT and NEA state affiliates) and community activists have stopped a so-called "right to work" anti-union bill.

The TRUTH about TENURE

It's maligned, misunderstood, and myth-ridden. So what IS teacher tenure, really? Read on.

A school board member in central Montana tells a parent that the school can't fire an ineffective teacher because "the union will sue us." A young teacher in western Montana says she believes tenure gives teachers "a job for life," because a college professor told her so.

In Montana and nationwide, myths about teacher tenure abound. Widespread misunderstanding has contributed to attacks on tenure from anti-public education politicians and others. (It doesn't help that slanted films such as "Waiting for Superman" portray tenure as a villain that keeps "bad" teachers in the classroom.)

Several states have tried to pass laws abolishing or weakening teacher tenure. Some have succeeded. In Montana, the 2011 legislature saw several bills that attacked teacher tenure. House Majority Leader Tom McGillvray (R-Billings) fired a chilling salvo the very first day of the session, when he announced that his party was gunning for tenure.

MEA-MFT stopped these attacks, thanks to thousands of our members who called and e-mailed legislators telling them the truth about teacher tenure. We can expect more attacks on

tenure, however. In fact, Rick Hill, a leading Republican candidate for governor in Montana's 2012 election, has said repeatedly that teacher tenure must be eliminated.

We have our work cut out for us to hang onto teacher tenure. So it's important to understand what tenure is and isn't.

Tenure: just the facts

What's in a name? "Tenure" by any other name simply means that schools can't fire teachers without a legitimate reason. (That's called "just cause" or "good cause.") Tenure requires administrators to notify teachers of performance problems and give them a fair hearing ("due process") before firing them.

Every state has a law protecting teachers from unfair dismissal. Tenure laws vary from state to state. Montana's k-12 teacher tenure law dates back to 1913, when the state legislature allowed tenure for teachers hired for two consecutive years.

Tenure has the same purpose now as it did in 1913: to make sure employers can't fire ("nonrenew") teachers for personal or political

K-12 teachers alone have a three-year probationary period. During that time, they can be terminated for no reason.



reasons that have nothing to do with classroom effectiveness.

“Without tenure, all teachers are at the mercy of school boards that occasionally nonrenew qualified teachers for a myriad of unjustified reasons. Tenure at least forces school boards to have cause to terminate a teacher,” wrote MEA-MFT member William Ulrickson, a retired Lambert music teacher, in an e-mail to his legislators during the 2011 session.

In Wyoming, for example, nontenured teacher Annabel Stoddard was terminated because of her “physical size, her lack of church attendance, and the location of her trailer.” (“Tenure under Fire,” Michael D. Simpson, NEA Office of General Counsel)

Without tenure, teachers could be fired for failing to start a school board member’s child on the basketball team, displaying the “wrong” yard sign, or being the “wrong” age.

Teacher tenure is not a guarantee of a job for any period of time, let alone a lifetime. Tenure merely gives teachers the same protection that other employees have. State law (Wrongful Discharge Act) protects all employees from unfair dismissal after they pass a probationary period. But in Montana, it takes three years for a k-12 teacher to get tenure. This means teachers, and teachers alone, have a *three-year* probationary period, while all other employees—private and public sector—enjoy a probationary period of a few (often six) months, occasionally up to a year.

Until teachers sign their fourth consecutive contract with a single school district, they can be nonrenewed for no reason and without a hearing.

So in effect, the person who bags your groceries gets “tenure” after a few months, while teachers have to wait three years.

Tenure does not protect incompetent teachers. Rather, it protects competent teachers from unfair dismissal. Tenured teachers can be terminated at any time if the school district is able to show good cause.

“It’s not hard to fire an incompetent teacher in Montana,” explained MEA-MFT Member Rights Director J.C. Weingartner. “But it’s up to the school district to document the teacher’s shortcomings.” The school district’s evaluation process must point out the teacher’s deficiencies

and outline what the teacher must do to correct the problems.

The problem, said Weingartner, is that many school administrators fail to evaluate teachers properly. Some fail to evaluate at all. “If you’re not evaluated, you can’t correct a problem you don’t know you have,” he said.

“MEA-MFT has never advocated for an incompetent teacher,” Weingartner continued. “We won’t protect an incompetent employee, but we will protect the contract. If the contract says the employer has to evaluate employees twice a year, and the employer fails to do so, we have to enforce the contract for the rest of the employees.”

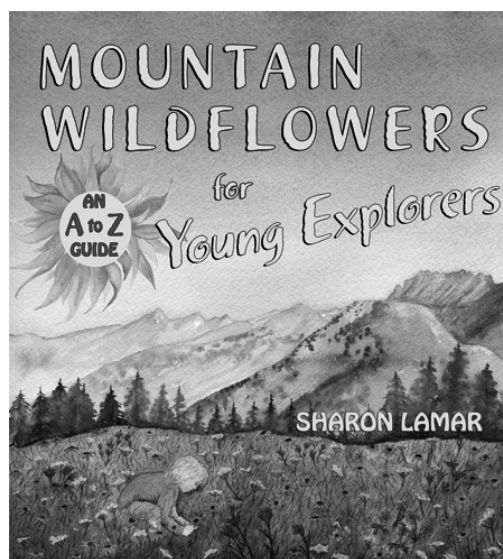
If an administrator can show good cause for firing, the union is powerless to save the teacher’s job, Weingartner continued.

“No one—not parents, not students, not school districts, not taxpayers, not teachers themselves, and not teachers’ unions—wants unskilled or ineffective teachers in any classroom,” wrote MEA-MFT member Mike Picking, president of the Great Falls Education Association, and MEA-MFT Field Consultant Jerry Rukavina in a recent joint letter to the *Great Falls Tribune*.

“But the wholesale evaporation of a teacher’s right to a just and fair due process...does not resolve the issue.”

Someone tell that to Montana gubernatorial candidate Rick Hill. Please. ■

‘No one wants ineffective teachers in any classroom. But the wholesale evaporation of a teacher’s rights does not resolve the issue.’



MEA-MFT member Sharon Lamar of Bigfork, an author, illustrator, and educator recently published *Mountain Wildflowers for Young Explorers: An A to Z Guide*. Sharon writes and illustrates natural history books to use in her classroom and shows her watercolor paintings at art shows. More at anne@mtnpress.com.

Nominate for presidential math & science awards

Do you know an exceptional math or science teacher in grades k-6? Do you think this teacher deserves national recognition, a \$10,000 grant,



Montana's 2011 PAEMST state finalists are honored by the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation at a celebration in Helena in November. Two state winners will be selected from these finalists. From left: Tammy Johnson, Math; Jan Mader, Science; David McDonald, Science; Joy Javorka, Math; Beth Walsh, Math; Carol Pleninger, Science.

and a paid trip to Washington, DC for two to attend special recognition events?

If so, consider nominating this teacher for a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

(PAEMST), the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science. The National Science Foundation administers PAEMST awards. MEA-MFT's Montana Professional Teaching Foundation administers the program in Montana.

Nominations are now open for the 2012 awards, which will honor math and science teachers working in grades k-6. (Teachers in grades 7-12 will be eligible for the 2013 awards).

Nomination deadline is April 1, 2012. Don't delay, though. It takes time for nominated teachers to complete a thorough application, and applications are due by May 1, 2012.

To nominate a teacher or apply for an award yourself, visit www.paemst.org. ■

Learning tools from NEA Member Benefits

NEA Member Benefits has partnered with learning organizations to bring you the following tools. Learn more about these and many more at www.neamb.org.

Raise funds with Adopt-A-Classroom: Rally your students' parents, your family members and friends, local business owners, and others to help support your efforts in the classroom. Register

online with Adopt-A-Classroom, a program that matches donors with teachers so you can raise funds for classroom supplies and materials. All donations are tax-deductible, and 100 percent of donations are passed through to your account. To get started, visit www.teachade.com and click on the "adopt a classroom" tab.

Lesson Planet: Find innovative, online, teacher-reviewed lesson resources, fast, using the Lesson Planet curriculum search solution. NEA Member Exclusive: Receive 20 percent off a one-year membership. Check it out at www.neamb.com/home/1209_5382.htm. ■



Free Curriki online resources and tools: MEA-MFT members have free access to thousands of online learning resources and tools such as lesson plans, videos, worksheets, multimedia activities and courses through the Curriki online community. Find open source peer-reviewed content, collaborate with other educators, and share your own content. Learn more about Curriki at www.neamb.com under the Professional Resources tab. Click on Products & Services.

NEA Academy: Not ready to embark on a master's degree? Consider a graduate certificate.

Open to educators with bachelor's or master's degrees, a graduate certificate is an efficient way to advance your career by acquiring skills and expertise in a specific specialty area.

Coursework completed for a certificate typically applies to a master's degree program at the same institution, should you decide to pursue that later.

Two NEA Academy online master's degree program partners, Walden University and UMassOnline, together offer more than 15 graduate certificates in such areas as: Instructional Design and Technology, Curriculum and Instruction, Organizational Leadership, Educational Policy, and more.

Get all the details to plan your path to career advancement at www.neaacademy.org/graduate-certificate-programs.html. ■



Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau proclaims ESP Day in Billings Nov. 16.

Denise Juneau honors ESPs

“Education support professionals are the unsung heroes of everyday school life,” said Montana Superintendent Denise Juneau at Riverside Middle School in Billings November 16.

“They are the people who keep schools running, deliver the students to school and return them home, feed them, keep them safe, and make sure their schools are orderly and clean.”

Juneau spoke these words while proclaiming Education Support Professionals (ESP) Day in Montana, honoring the school secretaries, classroom assistants, maintenance people, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and others who keep Montana’s public schools running smoothly.

Juneau joined MEA-MFT member Deana Elder, president of the Billings Classified Employees Association, at Riverside for a celebration with local ESPs.

Juneau said she feels a special connection to education support professionals because both of her paternal grandparents worked as ESPs. Her grandmother worked as a school cook, and her grandfather was a bus driver and truant officer. Juneau herself began her education career as a classroom assistant.

“Education support professionals are a necessary component to ensuring every child receives a quality education,” Juneau said.

Education Support Professionals Day takes place as part of American Education Week in November every year. ■

AFT Innovation Fund grants

Got a bright learning idea? The AFT Innovation Fund will accept letters of interest from state and local AFT affiliates beginning Jan. 4, 2012. Letters are due by Feb. 2. Applicants with the most promising ideas will be invited to submit full grant proposals.

For 2012, AFT is encouraging bold and innovative proposals on expanding learning time for both teachers and students. AFT also encourages ideas related to implementation of the Common Core State Standards, teaching quality, and proposals with a “wow factor” that show the union taking unexpected risks on behalf of improved schools. Learn more www.aft.org/about/innovate/ ■

Help our foundation and support great teaching

An anonymous donor has promised to match all contributions to MEA-MFT’s Montana Professional Teaching Foundation Endowment up to \$5,000 made on or before **December 31, 2011**.

“I can’t think of a better time than right now to assist our great foundation that does so much to enhance and celebrate public education and the teaching profession in Montana,” said MEA-MFT President and Foundation Chair Eric Feaver.

“And when you give a dollar, you actually give two. Tax deductible.”

Write a check today to the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation Endowment, 1232 6th Ave., Helena MT 59601. And please spread the word. Anybody can make a tax deductible contribution for this excellent purpose.

To learn more about the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation, visit www.mea-mft.org/our_foundation.aspx. ■

The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation supports programs such as the Montana Teacher of the Year event. Here, 2012 finalist Beth Thomas, Teacher of the Year Tom Pedersen, and finalist Amy Konen are honored at the Foundation’s annual Teacher of the Year celebration in October.



The tough get going

MEA-MFT members galvanize for 2012 election crisis

MEA-MFT members are not the type to sit around wringing their hands when the going gets tough. They take action.

So when MEA-MFT's board of directors declared Election 2012 a crisis for public services, public education, and workers' rights, members began mobilizing statewide.

"It's electrifying," said MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow. "Our members have seen extremist governors and legislatures in states across the nation attacking public employees and working families this year. They aren't about to let it happen in Montana."

The momentum has been building all year. MEA-MFT and our coalition partners organized four huge rallies during the 2011 legislature, with thousands of MEA-MFT members and other citizens participating. As a result, the legislature restored three-fourths of the budget cuts enacted by the legislative majority.

Right after our April 1 "No Fooling with our Future" rally, MEA-MFT Representative Assembly delegates unanimously passed a new business item directing MEA-MFT to develop a

crisis plan to fight attacks on collective bargaining and workers rights.

Barb Fetting carried the new business item on behalf of the Billings Education Assoc. board of directors. "We had been watching closely what was unfolding in other states, especially Wisconsin, and also what was happening in our own legislature," she said.

"We were really worried for our members and for unions in general. We didn't want to see our rights eroded. We wanted MEA-MFT to be proactive, to run offense, so that when the attacks inevitably come to Montana, we have a plan and grassroots organization in place."

BEA members weren't alone in seeing the handwriting on the wall. MEA-MFT governance, staff, and members statewide had already been fighting the first wave of attacks in the 2011 Montana Legislature.

"We managed to stop the worst attacks," said MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow. "But if we don't have a supportive governor, House, or Senate in the next legislature, we can expect to go the way of Wisconsin, Idaho, and other states."

To avoid that fate, MEA-MFT leaders, staff, and local affiliates are engaged in a massive mobilization effort to prepare for the 2012 elections and beyond.

In 2012, Montanans will vote for governor, superintendent of public instruction, secretary of state, state auditor, state attorney general, state supreme court, and 126 legislative races.

"Everything hangs on the 2012 election," said MEA-MFT President Feaver. "Elected officials have a direct effect on our members' jobs, their salaries and workplace rights, their retirement, their families and communities, and the services they provide to Montana's people. This is the most important election I have seen in my many years as MEA-MFT president."

Not in Montana: To explain the risks and opportunities of the 2012 election, MEA-MFT Executive Director Erik Burke has developed a powerful presentation dubbed "Not in Montana."

"What happened in our legislature and across

'Our members have seen extremist governors and legislatures in states across the nation attacking public employees and working families. They aren't about to let it happen in Montana.'

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- 1. Make sure** your local union president has your personal contact information, including home e-mail and cell phone number. MEA-MFT is only as strong as our ability to reach every member individually.
- 2. Contribute** to MEA-MFT Committee On Political Education (COPE.) It takes money to help candidates who will stand up for you, your family, and your rights. The suggested contribution is just \$4 a month.
- 3. Speak up.** MEA-MFT members are trusted, influential members of their communities. People want to know what you think about candidates.
- 4. Help good candidates win.** Put up a yard sign, give a donation, knock doors, or make phone calls. Candidates need your help!
- 5. VOTE!** Thousands of Montanans didn't vote in 2010. In some cases, supportive legislators with a 100% MEA-MFT voting record would have won re-election if more people in their districts had voted.

the nation wasn't a fluke," Burke said. "It was part of a national agenda to decimate public education, public services, and the middle class."

The authors of this agenda are extremist billionaires like Charles and David Koch, their Americans for Prosperity front group, and the anti-government forces of the Tea Party, Burke explained.

The Not in Montana presentation has been shown at MEA-MFT district and local meetings across the state. Local affiliates can request a presentation through their MEA-MFT field consultants. The presentation includes action steps members can take to protect Montana's public services and worker rights.

More on our crisis progress:

- MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver has formed an Elections Crisis Task Force to activate MEA-MFT members to support candidates who support them and their work.
- A Political Action Tool Kit has been developed and distributed to local leaders.
- Leaders of the largest MEA-MFT locals have developed their own organizing plans.
- Many local affiliates are conducting Committee On Political Education (COPE) campaigns, with other locals planning theirs for next year.
- Hundreds of MEA-MFT members have seen the Not in Montana presentation that explains what is at stake in Election 2012 and how to make a difference.
- Local union membership voting histories have been compiled and distributed to locals. (Who votes is a matter of public record.) MEA-MFT local leaders have vowed to increase the percentage of their members voting in 2012.
- MEA-MFT continues to work with a broad



coalition of other citizen groups fighting to protect public services, public education, workers' rights, and the middle class in Montana.

The mobilization stories across the state are impressive. Here are just a few:

- Helena Education Assoc. president Tammy Pilcher signed up 137 new members as COPE contributors, and many of HEA's existing COPE contributors increased their contributions. "I explain what is at stake—tenure, retirement, our excellent contract—and members agree to sign up," Pilcher said. "They say it isn't a lot to ask, to spend \$4 a month to save your own job."
- Bozeman Education Assoc. president Tami Phillippi invited her members to watch the Not in Montana presentation. Over 150 attended. Many of them signed up to contribute to COPE and volunteered for election efforts.
- Great Falls Education Assoc. faculty rep Megan Murphy signed up every teacher member in her building for COPE after showing the Not in Montana presentation.

The future belongs to those who show up, as the saying goes. Please get ready to show up and get involved in Election 2012. Your own future is at stake! ■

Scenes from our 2011 legislative rallies.

Want to get your local members fired up?

Ask your MEA-MFT field consultant to schedule a "Not in Montana" presentation soon.



Think before you click

Q: Is it OK to use my work computer for personal business like Internet surfing, updating my Facebook page, online holiday shopping, checking my Tweets?

A: Don't touch that keyboard—unless it's for work. "Your employer owns the rights to all data and files in any computing device, network, or other information system," says MEA-MFT Director of Member Rights J.C. Weingartener.

The employer also has the right to monitor all systems, such as electronic mail messages (including personal, private, and instant messaging systems) and their content, along with all use of the Internet and computing equipment used to create, view, or access e-mail and Internet content.

Your e-mail is subject at all times to monitoring. An employee has no expectation of privacy.

"Remember, the 'delete button' really does not delete anything. All data is lurking around somewhere and can be readily retrieved," Weingartener says. "Know your employer's data policies. Follow them. Don't abuse them, or you may find yourself taking that slow walk home talking to yourself." ■

Regional Trainings: Find out what the excitement is about

MEA-MFT's regional training sessions continue. These events, hailed by our members as relevant, inspirational, and fun, provide training in topics ranging from communications to grievances, dealing with difficult people to navigating your local contract. The trainings are free to MEA-MFT members.

Here's what some MEA-MFT members said at the Eastern Montana Regional Training in Glendive this fall: "Great way to energize and empower members." "Thanks for bringing it to an area close to me." "It was awesome!" "Excellent information. Thank you!"

Upcoming regional training sessions include the following:

- **February 10-11, 2012:** North Central Regional Training, Great Falls.
- **March 2-3, 2012:** MEA-MFT South Central Regional Training, Billings.

Watch for more details at www.mea-mft.org. ■

Committee Weekend (from p. 3)

and staff, not *to* them." Juneau added that the partnership between MEA-MFT and the Office of Public Instruction has resulted in extraordinary improvements for children's education, through such projects as her Schools of Promise program.

She noted that it matters who speaks for teachers and who advocates for education.

"Over the next year, election work will be the work that matters," she said. ■

Victories (from p. 7)

President Randi Weingarten.

The victories have been a shot in the arm to Wisconsin's campaign to recall Gov. Scott Walker for his attack on public workers' collective bargaining rights. United Wisconsin is spearheading the recall effort.

"The middle class and working people won key battles on Election Day, but we can't take anything for granted," cautioned Feaver.

"The attacks will continue in states across the nation, including Montana, and MEA-MFT will hold strong against them. When the rights of working families are under attack, we have a moral obligation to fight back." ■

Pay plan ULP (from p. 6)

the agreement, then voted to delay consideration of the agreement by tabling it, then waited about another month before voting to take the agreement from the table and send it to the full House, and then the House killed the agreement (which embodied the offer the Legislature's designated bargainer made at the table) the day before the Legislature adjourned *sine die* (and did all of this while the Legislature did not complete its own process of determining how much money it had to pay its employees), and the effect of this was the unilateral implementation of a two-year pay freeze coming on the heels of a previous two-year pay freeze when in fact, the State had ample resources to pay for the deal it offered during face-to-face negotiations." ■

Important tax

notice: You can deduct your MEA-MFT dues from your taxes, but *only* if you itemize deductions, and *only* if your dues plus other miscellaneous deductions add up to at least 2 percent of your adjusted gross income.

NOTE: The portion of your MEA-MFT dues that goes toward our legislative activity is *not* deductible.

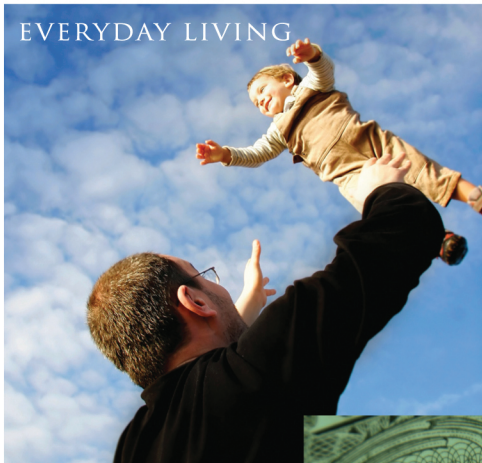
For 2011, the deductible amount equals 94.5 percent of your MEA-MFT dues, all of your local dues, and all of your national dues.

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AMAZING MEMBERS!

'We're their first line of help'

Kathe Enix works as a mental health associate at Acadia Montana in Butte. Acadia is a psychiatric residential treatment facility for children ages 5-18.

Kathe also serves as president of her local MEA-MFT union, the Federation of Health Care Workers.

She has worked at Acadia for nine years, previously on the day shift, now on the night shift, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Here's what we learned about Kathe:

What I do and why it matters: As mental health associates, we help integrate the children back into society. We see a vast range of conditions: ADHD, bipolar, schizoaffective disorder. Some of the children have been severely

abused. Some are depressed or suicidal.

We are kind of like surrogate parents, guiding them in proper manners, boundaries, and hygiene. We also help them in the classroom; we have an accredited school here. We facilitate group sessions in anger management, social skills, self-esteem, setting targets and goals.

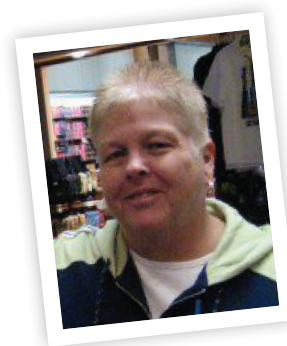
We teach them virtues such as courtesy, kindness, and fairness. We also teach de-escalation skills. Some of these children have little no impulse control. You have to have a lot of patience. They may lash out, even hit you.

We're their first line of help, their base foundation. We try to establish relationships with them so they feel safe, so they can work their treatment.

It matters because these kids all deserve a chance in life to be successful. We let them know they are good people and they do matter. They deserve to be treated with respect, kindness, and compassion. They deserve medical treatment too, which some have never had before.

Some of these kids have wonderful parents who just don't know how to deal with them. Some have never had anyone to listen or care about them before.

I work Christmas Day a lot. We have a tree and presents for the kids. One young adolescent boy told me once, "This is the best Christmas I ever had." He has no family. Those things pull at your heartstrings.



Amazing member
Kathe Enix

Best part of the job: I really like interacting with the kids, such as in groups—seeing a spark when they're interacting with each other and everyone is peaceful and calm and getting along.

Why I belong to MEA-MFT: It's important as an employee to have someone who is on your side, to advocate for you, to maintain wages and benefits.

In mental health, especially, wages are not high. If we didn't have a union to help us, it would be worse. This job is tough; it's emotionally draining, and there is a lot of turnover. But the union helps us get the best package we can, to make sure we have some security. We might not make a lot, but over the years we have negotiated pretty good benefits. The union is our safety net.

What I do for fun: I love to watch football, play with my dogs, visit my daughter in California, and read.

Good book I've read lately: *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher.

Thank you, Kathe, to you and all our members at Acadia who do Work That Matters for Montana kids and families! ■

**Wishing you
& yours
a warm & happy
holiday season!**

