

# Today

MEA-MFT

Feb/Mar 2012 Vol 14 No 3 [www.mea-mft.org](http://www.mea-mft.org)

INSIDE Bat crap crazy 2 State health clinic 5  
Coaches: shaping young lives 7 Matt Damon gets it 8  
Truth about Social Security 9 Amazing Charlie Martin 16

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



## Not in Montana

MEA-MFT local leader Melanie Charlson shows MEA-MFT's Not in Montana presentation to her members in Missoula, explaining how forces like the Koch brothers, Heritage Foundation, and American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) are connected to the radical bills and budget cuts that surfaced in Montana's 2011 legislative session.

## Not in Montana: our ground game

MEA-MFT members mobilize to defend public services and employee rights

**W**hen MEA-MFT member Melanie Charlson first saw MEA-MFT's "Not In Montana" presentation last summer, she got mad. Then she got mobilized.

"I was really moved by it," said Charlson, a math teacher and president of the Missoula Education Association.

"Now I see the direct link between what happened in the 2011 Montana Legislature and what happens in our classrooms here in Missoula. I see that what happens in Wisconsin or Idaho affects us right here."

The Not In Montana slideshow connects the dots between the radical bills and budget cuts that surfaced in Montana's 2011 Legislature and similar

actions in other state legislatures nationwide. It shows how ultra-rich, ultra-right wing players like billionaires Charles and David Koch and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) are orchestrating attacks on public schools, public services, and public employees in Wisconsin, Ohio, Arizona, Alabama, and many other states—including our next-door neighbor, Idaho.

The presentation also shows what MEA-MFT members can do to stop these assaults at the state line.

Charlson has been spreading the word for months, showing Not In Montana to her local members all over Missoula.

"I'm passionate about what we can do to make a difference in the next elec-

tion, to protect Montana's public schools, public services, and our rights as public employees," Charlson said.

**She's not alone.** From Missoula to Poplar, Billings to Kalispell, Helena to Shelby, Bozeman to Miles City, MEA-MFT's local leaders are talking to their members about the urgency of the 2012 election. It's all part of MEA-MFT's "ground game."

(Continued on page 12)

**Candidate Recommendations**  
Who supports your rights and the work you do? See page 10.

## Bat Crap Crazy

Come primary and general election days, voters must veto or not a number of nasty legislative referenda the Tea Party bloated 2011 legislature passed onto us. All bad...but for the moment I am going to pound on only two: Legislative Referenda 119 and 123.

**LR-119—Palpably, pathetically undemocratic.** LR-119 would dramatically narrow Montana voter participation in the election of our state supreme court. It would do so by creating seven supreme court electoral districts compelling candidates to live and run in one of these seven districts and forbidding voters in any one district from voting for candidates in the other six districts.

Voters would be able to vote in only one supreme court race every eight years—the length of a supreme court justice’s term! And no voter anywhere, anymore would be able to vote for the chief justice whom the elected justices would pick from amongst themselves.

LR-119 would create and exacerbate sectional differences on Montana’s last court of judicial review and morph the court into something frighteningly akin to a legislature.

LR-119 would amend our constitution without actually being proposed as an amendment. **Article 7, Section 9(4)** simply states, “Supreme court justices shall reside within the state.” Not a word in here about residing in districts as the legislature would have us decide.

LR-119 is under legal challenge. If the courts rule as they should, it will not be on the ballot in June. Yes, the primary ballot in June! So, our opportunity to veto this bad ballot issue could come earlier than folks expect. Not an accident.

Generally, more radically conservative folks queue up to vote in primaries.

**LR-123—Bat Crap Crazy.** LR-123 would cap state expenditures and expend legislative designated “excess” revenues on tax rebates...tax rebates to the richest income and property tax payers in the state.

LR-123 would memorialize

and replicate the arbitrary, capricious, and mendacious revenue and expenditure actions of the to be forsaken 2011 legislature—the legislature the governor aptly called “Bat Crap Crazy.”

It was exactly that. The legislature had plenty of revenue but refused to invest it in k-12 public schools, higher education, state employees, and a bonding bill to address critical infrastructure needs across our state and create hundreds of good-paying private sector construction jobs.

LR-123 is also under a legal challenge that MEA-MFT and friends have filed. Among several structural and constitutional impediments, we believe LR-123 is an appropriation of state revenue. If so, it violates **Article 3, Section 5(1)**—“The people may approve or reject by referendum any act of the legislature except an appropriation of money.”

LR-123 does not share the June ballot with LR-119. Consequently the courts may not be in a hurry to decide constitutionality. But even if the courts do not rule either referendum unconstitutional before one election or another, they will definitely have the opportunity to do so after the election should voters fail to veto one or both.

**Joe Balyeat—Über-Libertarian.** So time now to note that Grover Norquist acolyte Senator Joe Balyeat sponsored both LR-119 (SB 268) and LR-123 (SB 426).

Balyeat has been angry with the Montana supreme court since 1999 when the court declared CI-75 unconstitutional and voided the proposition. Balyeat’s proposed amendment would have required a popular vote on every new tax and fee at every level of government. (Former Montana Law School professor Rob Natelson and state Senator Dave Lewis also sponsored CI-75.) Voters narrowly passed CI-75 in November 1998.

In 2006, citing signature fraud, the supreme court struck again and tossed from the ballot CI-97, a constitutional amendment Balyeat and other anti-government yahoos promoted that would have capped state expenditures. Like LR-123. So it is that both LR-119 and LR-123 smack of a Joe Balyeat strike back at the supreme court and another attempt to drown us all in a bathtub.

For the record, MEA-MFT sponsored successful legal challenges to both CI-75 and CI-97. Us versus them. ■

BY ERIC FEAVER  
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT



Sign at last year’s April 1 No Fooling with Our Future Rally at the state capitol in Helena.



## Rep. Assembly 2012 will be action packed

Every spring, hundreds of MEA-MFT members gather for the annual MEA-MFT Representative Assembly, also known as Rep. Assembly or RA. RA delegates, elected by their fellow MEA-MFT members at the local level, set policy and direction for MEA-MFT. RA is democracy in action.

This year, RA takes place **March 30-31 in Missoula**. Local delegates will elect state officers, adopt a new legislative program, and hear from numerous political leaders and candidates. They will also consider a number of amendments to the MEA-MFT constitution and a budget based on another dues freeze. You can review the constitutional amendments and dues proposal at [www.mea-mft.org](http://www.mea-mft.org).

**Celebrating our members of the year:** As part of MEA-MFT RA, delegates will honor and celebrate the 2012 MEA-MFT members of the Year on March 30:

- Cecil B. Crawford, Missoula, MEA-MFT Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year.
- Shannon Bender, Great Falls, MEA-MFT Public Employee Member of the Year.
- Sandy Osborne and Kari Cargill, Bozeman, Faculty Members of the Year.

Watch for more about these great members in *MEA-MFT Today* and at [www.mea-mft.org](http://www.mea-mft.org). ■

### Jami Burk joins MEA-MFT staff

You'll see a friendly new face at MEA-MFT's headquarters office in Helena. Jami Burk recently became administrative assistant for MEA-MFT's research, communications, public policy, retirement, and member benefits programs.

Jami replaces Susan Wilkins, who now serves as MEA-MFT membership and technology specialist.

Jami grew up in Helena and graduated from Capital High School. She earned a degree in computer programming at the UM-Helena College of Technology. She previously worked in the admissions office at the College of Technology and before that as a paraprofessional at Rossiter



Butte delegates show their spirit at last year's MEA-MFT Rep. Assembly.

School in Helena.

Jami has five children: James (20), Sadie (19), Cody (18), Shelby (16), and Lane (15). For fun, Jami likes to go camping and skiing with her children and her fiancé, Troy.

Welcome, Jami! ■

### Ethnic minority members encouraged to participate

MEA-MFT encourages ethnic minority members to enter election races this spring for NEA Representative Assembly (RA) delegate positions. NEA Bylaw 3-1(g) asks that the delegation to NEA RA from each state include ethnic minority delegates in numbers at least commensurate with the population of the state. MEA-MFT is committed to achieving this goal in Montana's delegation.

Eligible locals may elect one NEA RA delegate for each 188 members or the greater fraction thereof. Locals with fewer than 95 members cluster by eligible governance districts. Ethnic minority members are encouraged to run for these positions.

MEA-MFT is further committed to greater involvement of ethnic minority members in all activities and programs.

MEA-MFT promotes the election of an ethnic minority member as the director-at-large to the board of directors and has an ethnic minority committee.

To learn more, contact your local union president or your MEA-MFT field consultant. ■



Jami Burk

### MEA-MFT TODAY

*MEA-MFT Today* published bimonthly September through May by MEA-MFT. Third Class Nonprofit Postage Paid at Billings, MT 59101. Permit No. 1

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[www.mea-mft.org](http://www.mea-mft.org)

Printed on chlorine free,  
SFI-certified paper.



# Light out of darkness

## MEA-MFT members rally to support family and co-workers of slain teacher Sherry Arnold

Like the rest of Montana, the MEA-MFT family was shocked to the core to learn about the murder of MEA-MFT member Sherry Arnold, a well-loved math teacher at Sidney High School.

for her children. Others have sent cards and letters to Arnold's family and to her SEA family.

### To reach out

Those who wish to express their support with cards, letters, or donations can send to the following: Cards and letters to Gary Arnold or Arnold/Whited families: c/o Sidney Public Schools, 200 3rd Ave. SE, Sidney, MT 59270.

Donations to Scholarship or Memorial Funds: Stockman Bank, Attn: Cheryl Steffan, 101 S. Central Ave., Sidney, MT 59270. Make check payable to Arnold Fund and designate scholarship or memorial. ■



Sidney citizens participate in the run-walk in memory of Sherry Arnold in February. They were joined by thousands of others around Montana and the world.

ELLEN WZNICK PHOTO COURTESY OF SIDNEY HERALD



Sherry Arnold

Arnold disappeared after leaving her home for a morning run in early January.

"It's unbelievable. Senseless and heartbreaking," said Mark Halverson, president of Arnold's local union, the Sidney Education Association (SEA). "It's hit us pretty darned hard."

Arnold's union brothers and sisters at SEA participated in the search after her disappearance. When law enforcement officials confirmed that Arnold had been killed, SEA members rushed to support her husband, Gary Arnold (a former teacher and MEA-MFT member who now works for the Sidney school district), and her children.

"We've helped with meals, companionship, supporting the family at prayer services, communicating our constant concern for their well-being," said Halverson. "We're just trying in every way to help the family and the community."

Other MEA-MFT members across the state have pitched in as well. Hundreds of MEA-MFT members across Montana braved single-digit temperatures to take part in a virtual run-walk organized in Sherry's memory. (People from many other states and countries also participated.)

Dozens of MEA-MFT locals and MEA-MFT itself have contributed to the memorial fund in Sherry Arnold's name and the scholarship fund

## Welcome, new MEA-MFT members

Two new groups of members joined the MEA-MFT family in February. In Livingston, 47 school food service employees, crossing guards, interpreters, and paraprofessionals became part of the Livingston Classified Employees Association (LCEA).

According to MEA-MFT Field Consultant Steve Henry, LCEA had included school custodians and secretaries for years, but not other education support professionals. "Last year, the other ESP folks said they wanted to join the union," Henry said. "They wanted someone to represent them and back them up. That's what the union does."

Henry filed a petition with the state Board of Personnel Appeals to include the additional employees. The school district initially contested the petition but withdrew its objections in February. "The new members immediately became part of the local union," Henry said.

In Kalispell, Head Start teachers and teacher assistants voted to form a local union and affiliate with MEA-MFT. The new local union will have 18 members, according to MEA-MFT Organizing Director Melissa Case.

Welcome aboard to all these new members! ■

## MEA-MFT fights for Corrections members

Does an employer get to pick and choose which sections of a contract it feels like honoring? No way, says MEA-MFT.

So when the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) refused to honor the salary progression schedule as bargained with its employees at the State Prison, Women's Prison, Pine Hills, Riverside, and Probation and Parole, MEA-MFT stepped in.

MEA-MFT represents employees in all five of those agencies. All five contracts stipulate that employees move a step up the salary schedule each year if they receive 40 hours of professional development training during the year.

But in July 2011, DOC announced that it wouldn't pay the salary increases, claiming that the contracts were under negotiation and therefore expired. Besides, said DOC management, the legislature hadn't appropriated money for the increases.

**"I think it's wrong,"** said MEA-MFT member Charlie Martin, a probation and parole officer in Billings.

"Our contract is still a binding agreement from the previous contract. They're not honoring that agreement. Balancing the budget on the back of their officers is wrong."

"This is the second year the department has refused to pay the salary increases," explained MEA-MFT Field Consultant Larry Nielsen,

who works with MEA-MFT members in the five DOC agencies.

"Two years ago, DOC said it hadn't budgeted for the increases. So (MEA-MFT President) Eric Feaver and (MEA-MFT Field Consultant) Tom Burgess walked across the street and talked to Governor Schweitzer about it. The governor told DOC to pay the increases."

When DOC tried the same thing this year, MEA-MFT took a different tack and filed six Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges in December 2011—one for each local DOC union, and one for MEA-MFT members in general. Later, the six ULPs were consolidated into one.

"The ULP is on the fast track," said Nielsen. "It will go to the Board of Personnel Appeals, and if everything moves as quickly as we hope, we might have an answer by mid-April."

According to Nielsen, a favorable ruling would have important repercussions for all MEA-MFT members. "This would set the precedent that if you've got steps and lanes in your contract, your employer has to honor them, even if the contract is under negotiation," he said.

**"This will benefit all our members,** state employees, educators, health care folks, everyone. If it's in the contract, management has to do it."

Charlie Martin, for one, is happy with MEA-MFT's advocacy. "Seeing MEA-MFT's work on the ULPs, I couldn't be more pleased," he said. ■

**'This will have repercussions for all MEA-MFT members. It will benefit state employees, educators, health care staff, everyone.'**

## State employee health center proposed

By this time next year, Montana state employees and their families may have their own health clinic. If the clinic works as Governor Brian Schweitzer and others predict, it will save money for state employees and Montana taxpayers alike, and it could result in more such clinics around the state.

Governor Brian Schweitzer announced in February that the State of Montana was considering creating a health clinic for state employees that would offer primary care physician services, including preventive medicine, as well as laboratory and pharmacy services.

The idea is to have a health care system

that promotes wellness while saving money, Schweitzer said. In part, the savings would come from having a salaried staff who don't get paid more if they order more procedures. Similar clinics for specific employee groups exist in Missoula (CostCare Clinic), Billings, and Laurel (MiCare clinics). ("Low Cost Models," by Mike Dennison, *Independent Record*, 2/27/12)

The governor's office has issued a request for proposal asking for bids to begin the process. The first clinic could open as early as the end of this year, likely in Helena. The project does not require legislative approval because it uses funds (Continued on p. 13)



## Julie Bullard: Carnegie Professor of the Year

Congratulations to MEA-MFT member Julie Bullard, who has been named as Carnegie Montana Professor of the Year.

Bullard teaches at the University of Montana Western. She is the third faculty member at UMW—and third MEA-MFT member—to receive the prestigious Carnegie honor in as many years. Delena Norris-Tull was Montana Professor of the Year in 2010; Rob Thomas was one of four U.S. professors of the year in 2009.

Bullard, a native of Malta, Montana, is a professor of education and director of early childhood education at UMW. “We’ve always known in early childhood that birth to age eight were critical years, but the rest of the world is now also beginning to realize that,” Bullard said in a news release from UMW. “It is an extremely rapid period of brain development, physical skills, and language.”

She added, “Modern brain imaging shows the brain actually begins to prune what is not used. If a child is not being stimulated, it actually changes the structure of the brain and it can’t be made up later. If we can intervene and provide rich experiences during these ages, we can prevent future issues and problems.”

Bullard’s research has contributed to the work of national boards and the publishing of several books, including her own book, *Creating Environments for Learning, Birth to Age Eight*. H. Jeffrey Jensen, one of Bullard’s students, describes her as “the Mother Theresa of Early Childhood.” ■

## Coming soon: Koch U?

This is raising eyebrows among academics: The billionaire Koch brothers, the same ones who have funded the Tea Party and right-wing politicians nationwide, now appear to be buying up portions of public universities.

According to *Inside Higher Ed*, the Charles G. Koch Foundation has been making six-, seven-, and eight-figure gifts to public institutions such as Florida State, Clemson University, George Mason University, Utah State University, and West

Virginia University. Some have raised questions about the political nature of these gifts, says *Inside Higher Ed*. Many of the donor agreements specify that the money will go to hiring of new faculty and expansion of centers with a mission to study capitalism, free enterprise, and economic freedom.

It sounds benign, but some academics are leery, given the Koch’s anti-government activism. The article quotes Cary Nelson, president of the American Assoc. of University Professors, as saying, “‘Economic freedom’ sounds like mom and apple pie until you realize it means the government shouldn’t collect taxes.... It is wholly inappropriate for an outside foundation to use a university to promote its ideological biases in this way. The Kochs can fund positions to hire faculty members who study these issues, but not control what stand the faculty members take on them.”

The Koch Foundation, for its part, says it respects and supports academic freedom. ■

## Angela McLean elected Board of Regents chair

MEA-MFT member Angela McLean recently became chair of the Montana Board of Regents. “Angela will be a great leader for the regents and Montana University System,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. “She is thoroughly familiar with education in Montana from early childhood through higher education.”

McLean previously served on the state Board of Public Education. She has a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction and is National Board Certified. She is curriculum director at Anaconda High School and teaches psychology, sociology, history, and government.

McLean says Montanans want access to affordable, high-quality education and opportunities in teaching and learning, research and service that will lead to good jobs for the betterment of their families and communities. “I am proud to say the Montana University System is up to the task,” she says. ■



Julie Bullard PHOTO COURTESY OF UMW

### Important membership information

In accordance with MEA-MFT Policy 603, members who wish to withdraw their membership from MEA-MFT must do so between August 1 and September 30.

Policy 603.1. Withdrawal from continuous membership must be by written notice to the MEA-MFT president. Such notice must be given between August 1 and September 30. After consultation with the local affiliate, MEA-MFT may take appropriate action against persons who attempt to cancel continuous membership outside the cancellation period. ■



Angela McLean



MEA-MFT member Carl Straub was featured in a recent national article about coaches and the positive impact they have on young people.

## Coaches: shaping young lives

“If you’re looking for educators who go the extra yard to make a difference in the lives of young people, look no further than coaches,” says a recent article in AFT’s *American Teacher* magazine.

AFT, one of MEA-MFT’s two national affiliates, featured several coaches around the nation in the story, including soccer coach Carl Straub, a health education teacher at Helena High School.

The article notes that while Coach Straub loves winning (and has won several state championships), it’s not as important to him as having the opportunity to instill confidence in the young men he coaches—and give them a glimpse of their innate potential.

“I’m hoping that through sports, they are getting the understanding that by going above and beyond, by working hard, they can accomplish anything in life they set out to do,” says Straub.

One of the most important lessons that can be passed on to young people through a team sport like soccer is how to be a leader, Straub believes. For that reason, he has the seniors welcome the new, younger players to the team and make sure they know what time practice starts or what to wear on game days. “We push leadership and what that means in a team setting,” says

Straub, who is a National Board Certified teacher.

Straub is quick to credit his assistant coaches, other staff, and his family as well as his players’ parents for helping him become a championship coach. Every year, he has his soccer team adopt a covenant. Last season it emphasized “family, passion, and class,” which sums up what he tries to do as a coach.

“I emphasize being a family, having a passion for playing the game, and doing it with class,” he said.

Nice work representing your fellow Montana coaches, Coach Straub! ■

*(Excerpts from American Teacher, AFT, May-June 2011 issue).*

## ESPs & bullying prevention

NEA surveyed thousands of education support professional members nationwide about issues related to bullying in public schools. Responses from school bus drivers, paraprofessionals, food service workers, and clerical workers formed the basis for four briefs on the topic.

You’ll find the reports at [nea.org/home/NEABullyFreeSchools.html](http://nea.org/home/NEABullyFreeSchools.html). ■

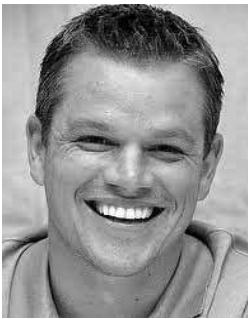
## StoryCorps celebrates public school teachers

StoryCorps, the national non-profit oral history project, is focusing on teachers this year with its National Teachers Initiative.

According to the StoryCorps website, the initiative celebrates “the brilliant and courageous work of at least 625 public school teachers across the country. By recording, sharing, and preserving their stories, StoryCorps hopes to call public attention to the contributions teachers have made to this nation, honor those who have embraced the profession as their calling, encourage teaching as a career choice, and unify the country behind its teachers—helping us all recognize that there is no more important or noble work than that of educating our nation’s children.”

Learn more: <http://storycorps.org/initiatives/national-teachers-initiative/>

## Matt Damon gets it



Matt Damon to public school teachers: “We love you, we thank you, and we will always have your back.”

Film star and Academy Award-winning screenwriter Matt Damon is a passionate spokesperson for public schools and public school teachers.

Damon narrates a new documentary film about teaching, *American Teacher*, which counteracts negative misconceptions about teachers and public schools and tells the real story about teaching. He also spoke up for teachers at the Save Our Schools March in Washington, DC last year. “I think you’re awesome,” he told teachers at that event.

“I was raised by a teacher,” he said. “And from the time I went to kindergarten through my senior year in high school, I went to public schools. I wouldn’t trade that education and experience for anything.

“I had incredible teachers. My teachers were empowered to teach me. Their time wasn’t

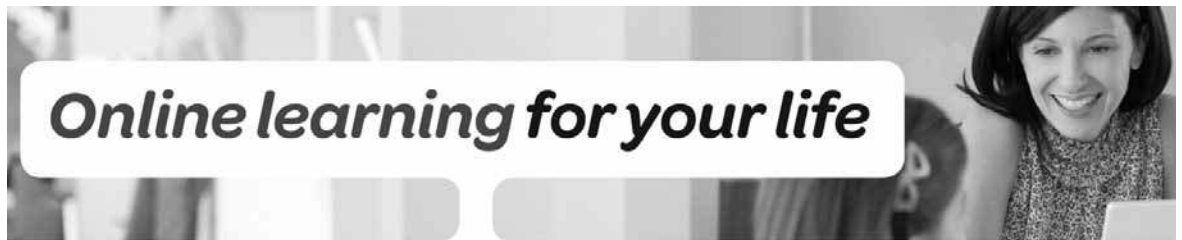
taken up with a bunch of test prep – this silly drill-and-kill nonsense that any serious person knows doesn’t promote real learning. I don’t know where I would be today if my teachers’ job security was based on how I performed on some standardized test....

“This has been a horrible decade for teachers. I can’t imagine how demoralized you must feel. But I came here today to deliver an important message.... Please know there are millions of us behind you. You have an army of regular people standing right behind you, and our appreciation for what you do is so deeply felt. We love you, we thank you, and we will always have your back.”

You can watch a video of Damon delivering his speech on the MEA-MFT web site: [www.mea-mft.org/Articles/matt\\_damon\\_lauds\\_teachers\\_at\\_save\\_our\\_schools\\_rally.aspx](http://www.mea-mft.org/Articles/matt_damon_lauds_teachers_at_save_our_schools_rally.aspx) ■

### Quotable:

“States with teacher collective bargaining [that includes Montana] routinely outperform right-to-work states academically, and teachers are unionized in most of the nations—such as Finland, Canada and France—whose kids kick our kids’ butts on international assessments.” (From “Can Teachers Alone Overcome Poverty? Steven Brill Thinks So” by Dana Goldstein, *The Nation*, Aug 29-Sept 5, 2011)



### Have You Visited NEA Academy’s New Interactive Website?

Your input helped guide the design of the NEA Academy’s new website, and we think you’ll be pleased with the results. Come explore the site and fill out your personal profile. Based on the preferences you select, this new interactive learning environment will provide content recommendations, course alerts, and additional material of specific interest to you. We invite you to see the all-new NEA Academy at [neaacademy.org](http://neaacademy.org).



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The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership  
WALDEN UNIVERSITY



UMassOnline  
University of Massachusetts  
MASS Amherst Boston Dartmouth Lowell Worcester

### NEA Academy’s University Partners

NEA Academy’s university partners were selected after a nationwide review of higher education institutions and advanced degree programs for educators. Visit the Academy’s website, [neaacademy.org](http://neaacademy.org), for more information about each of these outstanding institutions and their special benefits for NEA members.

 **neaacademy**  
Online learning for your life  
[neaacademy.org](http://neaacademy.org)



# The TRUTH about SOCIAL SECURITY

We've all heard the hype and hysteria around Social Security. Some anti-government politicians have tried to convince people that Social Security is on the ropes. These detractors often try to divide younger workers (telling them Social Security won't be there for them when they retire) from older workers (who paid into Social Security their entire working lives on the promise that the money will come back to them in retirement).

AARP, one of the nation's most trusted voices on the topic, offers calm, well-researched facts to cut through the rhetoric.

"Social Security is solvent and able to pay full benefits through 2036, even if Congress does nothing to strengthen it," says Claudia Clifford of AARP-Montana. Congress has a number of options to strengthen the program, she explains, and the sooner it happens, the less it will cost.

**AARP offers the following facts:**

## 1 Social security is not going broke.

Social Security can pay full benefits for the next 25 years—and that's without any changes at all. After that, it will still be able to pay future retirees 75 percent of their promised benefits. With modest changes, similar to those agreed to in the past by President Ronald Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill, Social Security will continue to be able to pay out the benefits future generations will earn through a lifetime of hard work.

## 2 Social Security is a good deal.

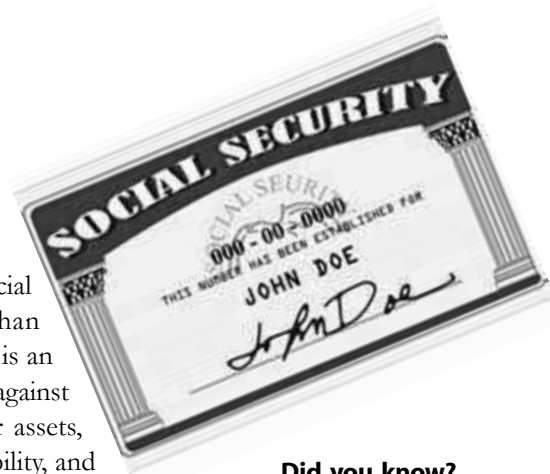
For 75 years, people have been paying into Social Security and receiving the benefit they earned. Since it began, Social Security has never missed paying a monthly benefit, and it is immune from fluctuations in the stock market and housing prices. No matter the state of the economy, Social Security pays out guaranteed monthly benefits that are protected from inflation. In fact, you would need about \$365,000 when you retire to purchase an annuity that paid out to you and your spouse an amount equal to the average monthly Social Security benefit,

kept up with inflation. Social Security is much more than an investment, however. It is an insurance policy protecting against the risks of outliving your assets, lost earnings due to a disability, and leaving survivors broke if you die prematurely.

## 3 Social Security is not a major contributor to the deficit.

Social Security is separate from the rest of the budget, financed from employee and employer payroll tax contributions, as well as the interest on bonds in the Social Security trust funds. Social Security has been running a surplus for decades and has not contributed to the nation's current deficit problem. Even in the midst of the recent economic crisis, the current \$2.6 trillion Social

(Continued on p. 13)



### Did you know?

Retired folks aren't the only ones who collect Social Security benefits. Workers with disabilities, children, widows and widowers, and others also benefit.

## Butte's Social Security story

When Social Security was enacted in 1935, state and local governments were given the right to vote to opt in to be covered by Social Security.

But in 1977, the City of Butte and Silver Bow County merged, creating a new government entity. That should have triggered a new vote by city/county employees on whether to opt in to Social Security. But nobody realized that a vote had to be taken until 2011.

At that time, an audit revealed that although Butte-Silver Bow had been collecting Social Security withholdings, they were not in compliance with the law. An election had to be held for all employees to decide whether to opt in to Social Security.

If Butte-Silver Bow employees voted to opt out, each employee would receive a refund for contributions they had made for the last 37 months, but they would lose Social Security benefits.

It was a tough call for some Butte-Silver Bow employees at first. But the six unions representing the employees—including MEA-MFT and our local leaders, Debbie Alt and Anne Mattioli—worked together to explain the advantages of Social Security now and in the future.

Ultimately, Butte-Silver Bow employees overwhelmingly voted to opt in.

"It was a vote of confidence that Social Security will be there for all employees long into the future," said MEA-MFT Member Rights Director J.C. Weingartner. ■



# The recommendations are in

MEA-MFT's COPE (Committee On Political Education) Board met with candidates for statewide office in recent months and put them to the test.

COPE is MEA-MFT's political action committee. The COPE Board includes the 35 locally elected members of MEA-MFT's regular board of directors. COPE Board members spend hundreds of hours interviewing candidates, reviewing voting records, and scrutinizing candidates' position statements. Then they vote on which candidates will do the best job of supporting public education, public services, workers' rights, and the middle class.

Recommendations are based solely on issues. Personality and political party play no role.

Here are the candidates for statewide office recommended by your fellow MEA-MFT members on the COPE Board, along with a few of the reasons given by board members themselves:

## JON TESTER, U.S. Senate



Jon Tester

"Jon Tester is the right candidate on our issues. He's right on education, right on public services, right on jobs, and right on the rights of working people to bargain collectively." **Mike Picking, Great Falls**

"Senator Tester has worked to make college more affordable for Montana families." **Mary Verploegen, Havre**

"Senator Tester respects the essential work public employees do." **Jill Cohenour, East Helena**

"As a combat veteran myself, I cannot be grateful enough for Senator Tester's commitment to veterans' health care. He also sponsored the 'VOW to Hire Heroes Act' that provides job and training for veterans. It passed Congress unanimously." **MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver**

## STEVE BULLOCK, Governor



Steve Bullock

"Steve Bullock is a national hero for standing up to the big corporations that want to buy our elections with their secret money. Montana is the only state in the nation to say citizens control our elections, not corporations. We have Steve to thank for it." **Ron**

## Kimmet, Hardin

"Steve grew up in Montana, and he has three young children of his own growing up here. He wants Montana to be a place where all kids have the chance to reach their dreams. That means strong public schools, safe communities, and good jobs." **Mona Bilden, Miles City**

After interviewing the candidates and studying the records, your colleagues on the MEA-MFT COPE Board recommend these statewide candidates.

MEA-MFT COPE Board members listen intently during candidate interviews. ▼



## DENISE JUNEAU, Superintendent of Public Instruction



Denise Juneau

“Denise Juneau has proven herself to be a true champion for Montana’s children and public schools. She knows the ropes, and she’s an innovator—an unbeatable combination.” **Diane Elliott, Poplar**

“Denise believes in doing school improvement with educators, not to them. She supports the people who work with school children every day—teachers and support staff—making sure they have the skills and resources to do their jobs well. Denise has put Montana on the map by standing up to punitive federal mandates in the No Child Left Behind law.” **Mike Thiel, Kalispell**

“I’m impressed with Denise’s work to promote innovation and new ideas in our schools, like the Montana Digital Academy and Graduation Matters Montana.” **Dan Kelly, Deer Lodge**

## LINDA McCULLOCH, Secretary of State



Linda McCulloch

“Linda McCulloch is a real champion for voter’s rights. We’re seeing a rash of bad laws nationwide that make it harder for people to vote, especially older folks, college students, and people with disabilities. Linda won’t let that happen in Montana. She believes any eligible voter who wants to vote should be allowed to vote.” **Rich Aarstad, Helena**

“Linda has emphasized clean, fair, honest, and open elections and accessible voter information. She brought Montana elections into the 21st century. The secretary of state’s web site now allows eligible Montana voters to check the status of their registration, find out where they vote, and lots more.” **Jeff Greenfield, Billings**

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## MONICA LINDEEN, State Auditor/Securities & Insurance Commissioner

“Monica Lindeen has an impressive record

of standing up for Montana citizens, protecting them from investment fraud, Ponzi schemes, and abuses by some insurance and securities companies,” **Janice Muller, Hamilton**

“Monica has been terrific in her work to keep health care costs from bankrupting Montana families.” **Terry Minow, Boulder**



Monica Lindeen

## ELIZABETH BEST, State Supreme Court Justice

“I am impressed with Elizabeth’s stand on the right to organize unions. She says it is a basic right of free speech, freedom of association, and freedom to participate in government. I know Elizabeth as a neighbor and through her service on the Centerville School Board. She stood up for teachers and staff, as well as students. She walks the walk when it comes to supporting public education and public services.” **Sue Lorang, Centerville**



Elizabeth Best



*I'm* **COPEing!**  
*Here's why:*

MEA-MFT member  
**MELISSA NOTTI**  
3rd grade teacher, Missoula

Melissa Notti recently made a significant increase to her COPE\* contribution to help elect MEA-MFT COPE-recommended candidates in Montana. Here’s what she says about it:

“I believe in what our union supports. Contributing to COPE helps us support the candidates who share our beliefs. It’s a way to help out—to further the cause.

“As a union and as individuals, we need to step up and get people out to vote to support candidates who support us.”

Thanks for COPEing, Melissa!

### Find out how you can COPE:

Contact MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow: [tminow@mea-mft.org](mailto:tminow@mea-mft.org) or 800.398.0826. Or call your local president.

\*MEA-MFT COPE (Committee On Political Education) is MEA-MFT’s political action committee. COPE funds help elect Montana candidates for office who support public education, public services, and workers’ rights. COPE donations are voluntary; no dues money is used for this purpose.



### Our ground game (from p. 1)

“We’re starting early and going hard,” said MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow. “The MEA-MFT Board of Directors has declared the 2012 elections a statewide crisis. If we don’t elect state legislators, a governor, superintendent of public instruction, and other officials who believe in public education, public services, and democracy in the workplace, Montana will face the same horrific loss of worker rights and cuts to services that other states have suffered.”

**MEA-MFT has organized a crisis team**

**‘We’re getting energized. We just need to keep the energy flowing through.’**

## Your turn to wield the veto brand

Governor Brian Schweitzer had to veto a lot of bad bills in the 2011 legislature. But Montana law prevents governors from vetoing bad legislative referenda.

So unless the courts declare them unconstitutional, LR 119 & LR 123 will appear on the June and November ballots, respectively.

**LR 119 would strip your rights** to vote for all Montana Supreme Court justices.

**LR 123 would give tax kickbacks** to the richest Montanans and hurt the state’s ability to fund public schools and public services.

Here’s your chance to exercise a citizen’s veto.



Your colleagues on the MEA-MFT COPE Board recommend:

**NO on LR 119**

**NO on LR 123**



of staff and local leaders to work with local affiliates statewide on the elections. “Forces like the Koch brothers and ALEC are trying to tear down America’s middle class, state by state,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

“Everything that matters to our members is at stake: their jobs, their rights, their families and communities, the very existence of public education and public services in this state.”

Local leaders like Melanie Charlson are playing a key role in the mobilizing effort.

As part of her presentation, Charlson shows her local members how Montana legislators in the 2011 session submitted bills created by the right-wing ALEC group—the same cookie cutter bills that have appeared in other state legislatures nationwide. These are bills that gut teacher tenure, privatize public schools and other public services, and attack collective bargaining rights, among other things.

**“When I show how our own legislature is linked with ALEC, people are shocked,”** Charlson said. She encourages members to fight back by contributing to MEA-MFT COPE (Committee On Political Education) to help MEA-MFT’s recommended candidates.

“I ask members to exercise one of the rights they still have by giving \$5 a month to COPE,” Charlson said. “The majority fill the COPE form out right there.”

**More on our ground game:** Along with showing Not in Montana, MEA-MFT local leaders are registering voters, recruiting volunteers, and interviewing legislative candidates.

“We’re interviewing all legislative candidates of both parties,” said Minow. “Before candidates get our recommendation, they must demonstrate conclusively that they stand with us on the issues: adequate funding for education and other public services, keeping public services public, and protecting workers’ rights.”

Diane Elliott, local president in Poplar, is recruiting fellow members to interview local legislative candidates in Poplar, Scobey, and Culbertson. She hopes to involve a record number of members in the interview process.

“I think more of them will see how important

(Continued on page 13)

## State health clinic (from p. 5)

already set aside for state employee health care.

“This could become a very big deal for all Montana, not just state employees,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. “At some point, other public and private sector employees could potentially opt in. This is a very exciting idea.”

Feaver continued, “State employees have had their salaries frozen going on four years, while health costs keep rising. That’s why MEA-MFT worked with the governor to freeze out-of-pocket health costs for state employees for a year.”

The health clinic proposal would have even more impact, Feaver said. “It will save money for taxpayers, control health care costs, and help our hard-working state employees make ends meet. We must grab every opportunity we can to control health care costs. Doing nothing is no longer tolerable.” ■

## Social Security (from p. 9)

Security Trust Funds continue to grow.

Social Security benefits are modest, and yet seniors depend on them as their largest source of income. An average worker’s Social Security retirement benefit will only replace about \$4 out of every \$10 they earned while working. Today, the typical retirement benefit is only about \$1,200 per month and is adjusted annually to keep pace with inflation. Social Security is critical not only to lower income seniors but also to protecting the middle class. Currently, 62 percent of Social Security beneficiaries in Montana rely on Social Security for 50 percent or more of their family income; while a third rely on Social Security for 90 percent or more of their family income.

## 4 Private accounts would jeopardize retirement security.

Unlike Social Security, private accounts would be at the mercy of a volatile stock market, which, on the heels of the worst recession since the Great Depression, would be a risky gamble. And, the administrative and transition costs of private accounts would also increase the federal debt and deficit at a time when our debt is already growing. Americans already have pensions and savings subject to market risk. Social Security provides security. With Social Security, you get

an inflation-adjusted lifetime benefit that will be there regardless of what the market does.

“Social Security has been a very valuable program for our country,” says Clifford. “It has lifted many people out of poverty.” ■

## Ground game (from p. 12)

it is to vote, and to vote for candidates who support public schools and public services,” she said.

In Butte, local president Mike Kujawa is signing up members to help local MEA-MFT-recommended legislative candidates. “We’re getting folks psyched up,” he said.

In Kalispell, local president Mike Thiel recently held a major drive urging his local members and others to sign up to vote by mail. Sixty people have signed up so far, he said.

“As a math guy, I see the statistics,” Thiel said. Ninety-percent of people with mail-in ballots actually do vote, he continued. “That’s much higher than the percentage of those who have to make time to go to polling places to vote.”

Thousands of Montana voters didn’t bother to vote in 2010, Thiel continued. Many good legislative candidates lost their elections as a result.

“We’re getting energized,” Thiel said. “We just need to keep the energy flowing through.” ■

‘Everything that matters to our members is at stake: their jobs, their rights, their families and communities, the very existence of public education and public services in this state.’

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# MEET MEMBERS' NEEDS

FINANCIAL SERVICES

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## Unions: working for the greater good

In this era of attacks on the rights of working people to form unions and bargain collectively, it might help to step back and take a look at what a union actually is.

**What is a union?** A union is a group of workers who have organized themselves for mutual aid. A union is a tool for working people to provide them with a collective voice on the job and in the broader society.

A union provides workers with a means to improve their lives in many ways. Unions bring working people better pay and benefits as well as legal and legislative remedies addressing the issues workers and their families care about: secure jobs and safe communities; necessary services like public education, health care, and public safety; and a measure of support in old age through employee pension plans and government programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

**The reason workers need unions** boils down to this: employers have far more power than workers do, especially if workers have to negotiate with them over wages and working conditions as individuals. Employers have greater financial resources, favorable laws, and the power that comes from the ability to hire and fire people who need to work for a living.

By forming unions, workers gain the power

that comes with being part of a group. As a group, workers can negotiate with their employers with greater chance of success than they can as individuals, through collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining means worker representatives sitting down with management representatives to discuss and decide matters such as how much workers will be paid and how to resolve conflicts in a manner fair to everyone involved.

**But a union is often much more than that.**

It is a measure of dignity for workers on the job. It is a kind of extended family, where workers take care of each other.

The impact of unions on American society has been great. As a result of the successes of the labor movement, much of the nation's working class was able to rise to achieve the "American Dream" of home ownership and a relatively comfortable and secure standard of living. Thanks to unions, many progressive laws protecting and enhancing the lives of all workers have passed—such as the eight-hour work day, the weekend, and child labor laws.

The positive effects of unions have not been limited to union members—they spread throughout society.

As AFT President Randi Weingarten has said, "The great irony is that organized labor—the

very movement that is largely responsible for elevating millions of workers and their families into the middle class; that has provided a counterweight to the exploitative and arbitrary practices of governments and corporations; and that has won a measure of economic stability and protection for all workers, not just its members—is now under assault....

"Our work and our aspirations have never been about our narrow self-interest. Unions are and always will be about the greater good." ■

[Portions of this article come from *Work, Money and Power: Unions in the 21st Century*, by Fred Glass, California Federation of Teachers, AFT/AFL-CIO, used with permission.]

Members of the Big Sky Labor Council, which includes MEA-MFT members, stand up for adequate funding of public services at the April 1, 2011 rally at the state capitol. ▼



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## Keeping Montanans safe: Charlie Martin

**M**eat MEA-MFT member Charlie Martin of Billings, a probation and parole officer with the Montana Department of Corrections, Adult Probation and Parole Bureau.

Charlie is president of his local union, the Montana Federation of Probation and Parole Officer Local 4464. He is one of six state employee representatives on the MEA-MFT Board of Directors.

Here's what we learned about this amazing member:

**What I do and why it matters:** I supervise a caseload of approximately 75 adult offenders who have been sentenced for different felonies.

The work that probation and parole officers conduct on a daily basis is very important to the safety of all communities in the state of Montana. If felons can learn to abide by the law and conduct themselves as productive citizens in our state, the financial burden is much more cost effective for each and every taxpayer than if the felons are incarcerated for a long period of time.

**Most challenging part of the job:** Learning to put the accountability of the felons where it belongs: on them. If I, as a probation and parole officer, am work-

ing harder at their rehabilitation than they are, it is very frustrating.

**What I love about the job:** I love working for the citizens of Montana. Along with all state employees, I take pride in the services we provide our communities.

**Why I belong to MEA-MFT:** I used to ask myself why we were part of the "teachers' union." A year and a half ago I became vice president of our local, then president. At MEA-MFT board meetings I saw for myself what MEA-MFT does for state workers. I've met teachers who testified on House Bill 13 (the state pay plan) and other bills for state employees. I saw their enthusiasm and dedication to our issues as well as their own. I see now that MEA-MFT is a family that encompasses many professions.

**What I do for fun:** Spending time outdoors in Montana—including hunting, fishing, camping, spending time with family, smoking cigars, and riding Harleys with my wife. I'm a member of the Iron Warriors Motorcycle Club.

Thanks, Charlie, to you and your fellow probation and parole officers for doing Work That Matters for Montana's families and communities! ■



Charlie Martin

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