

MEA-MFT member Angela McLean: Montana's new Lieutenant Governor

Back when she was waiting tables at the Blue Anchor Café in Twin Bridges as a high school student, MEA-MFT member Angela McLean never dreamed she would serve as Montana's lieutenant governor one day.

Great teachers and the support of family and friends made it possible, she said February 10, when Governor Steve Bullock appointed her to fill the vacancy left open by John Walsh, who replaces Max Baucus as U.S. senator.

Bullock made the announcement in McLean's government class at Anaconda High School. When she left the school, students, teachers, administrators, and staff lined the halls to cheer her on.

MEA-MFT members are cheering too. "We are incredibly proud of An-
(Continued on p. 6)



Lt. Governor Angela McLean
in the governor's office with
a bouquet of flowers from
her MEA-MFT family.

Saving GABA: 'I like our odds'

Thousands of MEA-MFT members had a happier holiday season this year than many expected, thanks to court rulings that stopped the Grinch from stealing their Guaranteed Annual Benefit Adjustment (GABA)—at least for now.

The rulings came about because MEA-MFT and our allies sponsored two lawsuits challenging the 2013 Legislature's cuts to GABA for current and future retirees in the Public Employees' and Teachers' Retirement Systems (PERS and TRS).

Along with the lawsuits, we asked the courts to stop the cuts from taking effect January 1, 2014, as the legislature originally mandated. District Judge James Reynolds granted our request December

20 with a preliminary injunction stopping the PERS GABA cuts until the court can rule on our lawsuit. A week later, Judge Mike Menahan followed suit on the TRS case, granting a preliminary injunction delaying the TRS GABA cuts.

Now we wait for court dates to present our objections to the legislature's attempts to gut GABA. The preliminary injunctions stay in place in the meantime, so GABA remains unchanged.

"The battle is far from over, but I like our odds," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. "GABA allows retired public employees a modest but important hedge against inflation. The legislature's cuts to GABA were unnecessary and unconstitutional. They violate contractual

agreements between public employees and their employers. That's our case, and we expect to win."

Watch for updates at mea-mft.org. ■

Health insurance news for state employees & k-12 members

Heads up, state employees and k-12 school employees: a lot is happening on the health insurance front that affects you. Read inside about:

- State employee union victories in health care and how you can save even more money: **page 5**

- How the Affordable Care Act could affect k-12 local unions' group insurance policies: **page 8**

Stop that voter!

OUR POINT OF VIEW



BY ERIC FEAVER
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT

It matters who votes...and it matters who wins. The power to vote is the one institution all citizens own, in which we all have the opportunity to participate, each and every one of us.

The power to vote distinguishes our democracy from despotism.

And whether our preferred candidates win or lose, the power to vote must never be abridged, compromised, or forestalled.

So, when Republican partisans promote obstacles for voters...and attempt to orchestrate a premeditated electoral outcome, this union and all who believe in our democracy must stand up and say NO.

Almost a year ago, toward the end of the 2013 Legislature, the Republican-dominated Montana State Senate rushed two bills through the Senate over the vociferous, desk-pounding opposition of minority party Democrats.

Senate Bills 405 and 408 had to pass over to the House that day or they would have died. And pass they did, with the Republican majority unanimously voting YES...and Democrats unanimously voting...well in fact they didn't vote at all. A brittle moment. Not to be forgotten.

SBs 405 and 408 passed the Republican-dominated House no sweat.

These two bills are now Legislative Referenda 126 and 127 respectively. They will both (maybe) appear on the November general election ballot.

Vote NO!

If we fail to secure a NO vote in 2014, come 2016, Montanans will have reduced the number and kind of citizens voting in the general election and inflicted upon themselves one-party primary election outcomes.

LR 126 ends general election day registration, denying the vote to citizens who may have moved around a bit like college students, military personnel, senior citizens, and Native Americans.

Apparently, majority party Republicans think citizens like these should not be permitted to register and vote on election day because doing so leads to long voter lines and waits, or more

work for county clerks and recorders...or because these voters might, maybe, perhaps vote for Democrats?

LR-127 eliminates our closed primary system wherein a voter must pick a party ticket ...and further directs that only the top two vote recipients, regardless of party, go onto the general election.

As LR 127 eliminates third-party candidates from appearing in the general election, it promotes one-party elections. This latter outcome is more than likely in legislative districts dominated by Democratic and Republican voters.

They do this in California!

It should be obvious that the Republican majority in the last legislature would with LRs 126 and 127 have Montanans affirm its majority party status well into the future and eliminate third-party candidates. So much for independent voters.

MEA-MFT filed petitions in the Montana Supreme Court challenging the legal sufficiency of LRs 126 and 127. We asked the court to toss both from the general election ballot.

The court agreed with us that the title of SB 405 and the attorney general's initial purpose statement on LR 126 were inaccurate and misleading but then directed the attorney general to rewrite the purpose statement. Not the victory we were looking to achieve. We must still defeat LR 126 at the polls. As we do, we will be sure to note throughout our campaign that partisan supporters wanted to fool voters into thinking LR 126 had something to do with the National Voter Registration Act. It does NOT.

As for LR 127, we wait the Supreme Court's decision. We have challenged the referendum stating that SB 408 had more words in its title than law permits, a lot more words. And further LR 127 logrolls voters into voting for two issues in one. An open primary need not require the top two vote recipients to advance to the general election.

Bottom line, vote NO. ■

LR 126 & LR 127 restrict our freedom to vote. They threaten the rights of seniors, recently returned military veterans, and other eligible voters to have a voice in our democracy.

Stronger together: MEA-MFT Rep. Assembly 2014

Delegates from MEA-MFT local unions all over Montana will gather in Helena March 28-29 for our annual Representative Assembly. Make sure your local sends its share of delegates, because RA is where the action happens for MEA-MFT. It's democracy in action.

Up for debate and vote at RA this year: proposed constitutional amendment, proposed dues, and new business items. Delegates will also hear from Montana's elected officials, honor members of the year, inaugurate the MEA-MFT Hall of Fame, and much more.

MEA-MFT statewide offices to be elected at RA include president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, director-at-large, even-numbered district chairs and vice chairs, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly, Student Program chair, and Retired Program chair and vice chair.

Proposed amendment to MEA-MFT Constitution: Constitutional Amendment #1

10. STATE OFFICERS

No change A through D.

New E. Notification

1. Candidates for state office must inform the MEA-MFT executive director in writing of their candidacy at least 60 calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.

2. The executive director shall notify members and local affiliates of officer candidates at least 30 calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.

Re-letting all subsequent provisions.

H I. Nominations and Elections

State officer nominations and elections shall be conducted according to this constitution and the standing rules of the representative assembly.

604 Dues – Proposed Changes 2014

(Note that the proposed full dues increase of \$6 is the first dues increase after a two-year freeze.)

1. Full dues level for active members for ~~2013-14~~ **2014-15** shall be ~~\$376~~ **\$384**, reflecting ~~.00785~~ times the ~~2011-12~~ **2012-13** Classroom Teachers Average Salary of ~~\$47,839~~ **\$48,855**.

2. The full dues level shall be adjusted downward in 10 equal steps for those earning less than the CTAS level of ~~\$47,839~~ **\$48,855**.



▲From left: Laurie Enebo, Logan Brower, and Rochelle Brower of Glasgow joined dozens of other MEA-MFT members from around the state to participate in Committee Weekend in Helena Jan. 5-6. Committees reviewed MEA-MFT's constitution, resolutions, and more in preparation for Rep. Assembly. Here they listen to the governor's budget director, Dan Villa.

Step no.	% of full dues	Annual dues	Min. salary	Max. salary
10	100%	\$384	\$43,970	or higher
9	90%	\$346	\$39,084	\$43,969
8	80%	\$307	\$34,199	\$39,083
7	70%	\$269	\$29,313	\$34,198
6	60%	\$231	\$24,428	\$29,312
5	50%	\$192	\$19,542	\$24,427
4	40%	\$154	\$14,657	\$19,541
3	30%	\$115	\$9,771	\$14,656
2	20%	\$ 77	\$4,886	\$9,770
1	10%	\$ 38	Up to...	\$4,885

3. The full national dues level for MEA-MFT members shall be the higher of the dues of the two national organizations, rounded off to the nearest dollar.

4. MEA-MFT Student Program member dues shall be \$10. Active members who have held membership in MEA-MFT Student Program for at least one full-year and up to four years shall be allowed \$50 per year credit on their MEA-MFT dues in their first regular year of employment.

5. Effective September 1, 2009, Retired MEA-MFT lifetime dues shall be \$210 and increase \$10 every year thereafter for ten years.

6. Substitute teacher dues shall be \$100. Active members who have held membership as an MEA-MFT substitute teacher member for at least one full year and up to four years shall be allowed \$30 per year credit on the MEA-MFT dues in their first regular year as an active member.

7. a. Agency fee payers' local, state, and national fee obligation total shall be established

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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 2013, the deductible amount equals 93.7 percent of your MEA-MFT dues, all of your local dues, and all of your national dues.

From left: Gene Meegan, Kevin Bock, and Renne't Sarbu, three of MEA-MFT's state employee organizing team members, spend a recent Saturday knocking on doors and visiting other Helena area state employees in their homes. ►



Building power in the workplace: State employee organizing project

In growing numbers, MEA-MFT state employee members are attending union trainings to learn new skills, serving on labor management committees, recruiting new members, and standing up with coworkers to have their voices heard in the workplace.

Teams of state employee members have even been visiting coworkers in their homes for one-on-one conversations about workplace issues.

It's all part of a major new project to build more strength in MEA-MFT's state employee locals. MEA-MFT is coordinating the project, with funding help from our two national affiliates, NEA and AFT.

The organizing team: Home visits are a key part of this project. For several months, teams of MEA-MFT state employee members have been meeting at MEA-MFT headquarters in Helena after work and on weekends. From there, they fan out to knock on the doors of other state employee members — and nonmembers, too.

"We're listening to their concerns about issues, from workplace bullying to the need for professional development, and discussing how we can solve problems together as a union," said MEA-MFT Organizing Director Morgan Smith,

who coordinates the project and knocks on doors right alongside the team. "We're showing that by standing together and building power, state workers can make positive changes. People are jumping on board to get involved."

Leaders of the project include Kevin Bock, Gene Meegan, and Kyla Gardiner—all Dept. of Revenue employees; Renne't Sarbu, who works at the Dept. of Public Health and Human Services; and Rowena Harrington of the Montana Historical Society. Many other members are also getting involved.

So far, the home visit team has made contact with nearly 250 fellow state employees. MEA-MFT's Dept. of Revenue local has gained 33 new members as a direct result of the organizing project.

The team has completed Phase 1 of the project. "Now we're training for Phase 2, looking for leaders among the people we've contacted," said Meegan. The team has identified 174 potential leaders—people who expressed interest in getting more active in the union. State employee members hope to expand the organizing project beyond Helena into other Montana communities. (Continued on p. 5)

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State employees (from p. 4)

There's a sense of urgency to the project.

"This is about making sure our workplaces are safe, our health insurance is intact, our pensions are protected, and our voices in the workplace are heard," Smith said.

"The 2015 Legislature is just 10 months away," noted Bock.

"There's another team out there working just as hard to oppose our efforts," added Meegan, referring to attacks nationwide on public employees' rights.

The organizing project's vision is far more long-range than the next legislature, however. The project aims to build more unity, amplify state employee voices, and celebrate more victories in the workplace through collective action.

State employees saw significant victories in the last year. After a four-year salary freeze, they are receiving across-the-board 3 percent and 5 percent salary increases and 10 percent health benefit increases in each of the next two years. The Public Employees Retirement System is intact and healthy. Local bargaining has produced even more gains.

These victories didn't happen by accident.

They happened because MEA-MFT state employee members, leaders, and staff spent many hours bargaining, talking to legislators, and working on local negotiations. None of this would be possible without joining together as a union.

"We can gain even more ground if we all stand together," said Smith.

Want to learn more? Contact Morgan Smith: msmith@mea-mft.org ■



'We're showing that by standing together and building power, state workers can make positive changes. People are jumping on board to get involved.'

Morgan Smith
MEA-MFT Organizing
Director

◀Opportunity knocks:
State employee
organizing team
members on a
home visit.

More good health care news for state employees

As of January 1, 2014, most MEA-MFT state employee members began seeing a modest increase in their paychecks because of lower health insurance premiums.

Why is this money coming back to state employees? There are several reasons:

- MEA-MFT and our fellow public employee unions bargained in the state pay plan (House Bill 13) a 10 percent increase in the employer's contribution to health insurance. This increase is outpacing any increases in health insurance rates that state employees may see.

The increased employer share amounts to \$73 per month per state employee beginning this January. That adds up to \$876 per year—no small chunk of change. The employer increase is even bigger beginning next January: \$81 per month.

- Montana's State Employee Group Benefits Advisory Council (SEGBAC) is doing a great job of helping keep health care costs down. SEGBAC has 12 members representing state employees, unions, and retirees to advise the state Health Care and Benefits Division (HCBd).

MEA-MFT Field Consultant Brian Ehli represents MEA-MFT on SEGBAC.

- More state employees are using the new state health care centers in Helena, Billings, and Miles City, saving money for themselves and taxpayers alike. The Helena center alone saved almost \$3 million its first year, with the savings shared between patients and the state health plan. Another state health center will open in Missoula this May. Others are planned throughout Montana.

- More state employees are participating in wellness and health screenings offered by the state. This is keeping costs down for everyone in the state health insurance plan.

MEA-MFT members can continue to capitalize on discounts and cost savings for themselves and their families by participating in health screenings, health assessments, non-tobacco use, preventive services, and engaging in programs to reach their health goals. For more information, contact HCBd at 444.7462 or 800.287.8266. Or log on to the HCBd web site: benefits.mt.gov/pages/wellness.live.life.well.html ■

Prebudget bargaining to begin
MEA-MFT and our fellow public employee unions have sent an official request to the governor's office to begin negotiations for the next state employee pay plan. The process involves dozens of union members from around the state meeting with the governor's negotiators. Stay posted at our web site: mea-mft.org

Head Start funding restored

The federal budget compromise passed this winter restores the funds Congress previously cut from Head Start through the “sequester” process. And it adds even more funding for Head Start.

Head Start advocates nationwide were dismayed earlier when the congressional sequester cut 5 percent across the board from Head Start programs. The sequester was a mass of automatic budget cuts that threatened thousands of jobs and essential services for Americans.

The cuts hit Head Start particularly hard. They resulted in the closure of many Head Start programs, staff layoffs, and the loss of Head Start services to 57,000 of the nation’s most vulnerable children and their families. In Montana alone, 221 children were affected.

The federal budget compromise restores funds cut from Head Start programs and adds new funds to this chronically underfunded program.

Baucus & Tester vote for Head Start, Daines votes against: Montana Senator Jon Tester and former Senator Max Baucus voted in favor of the budget compromise bill and therefore voted to restore and increase Head Start funding. They get it: They know Head Start breaks the cycle of poverty and gives our neediest children a chance for a bright future.

Montana Congressman Steve Daines voted against restoring Head Start funding by voting against the budget compromise. Daines was one of only 67 representatives nationwide to vote no; 359 voted yes. The *Bozeman Chronicle*

wrote in dismay about Daines’s vote in an editorial (“Daines must resist pull of tea party ideologies,” 1/27/14). The editorial said, “Montana Rep. Steve Daines last month joined some of the most extreme Republican members of Congress and voted against the federal budget compromise crafted by Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.”

The *Chronicle* continued, “Without both parties willing to give and take, we are left with a dysfunctional Congress. We are left with seemingly one budget crisis after another, the last of which left us with a two-week shutdown of the federal government that significantly impacted our country and state.... “[W]e are concerned that he [Daines] has consistently chosen to put political ideology ahead of governance. That may be the easy choice. It doesn’t seem much like leadership....” ■

Rep. Assembly (from p. 3)

annually by the MEA-MFT board of directors.

b. Agency fee payers shall be afforded only those rights required by law (e.g. rights and protection afforded by terms of local affiliate collective bargaining agreements). They shall not be afforded any right or benefit, including any governance rights for which membership is required.

8. Associate member dues shall be \$25. ■

Angela McLean (from p. 1)

gela,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. “She is the first classroom teacher and first MEA-MFT member to serve as Montana’s lieutenant governor. She is a dynamic champion of public education and public services. She’s one of us.”

Along with teaching history and government, McLean has served on the Board of Regents, which governs the Montana University System, since 2010 and was elected chair in 2012. She previously served on the state Board of Public Education. McLean and her husband, Mike, have two children: eighth-grader Colin and fourth-grader Ellen.

“I’m incredibly honored to have this opportunity and I look forward to getting to work for Montana,” McLean said of her new job.

Congratulations, Angela! ■

Thanks, Jon & Max!

Our thanks to Montana Senator Jon Tester and former Senator Max Baucus, for voting for the budget compromise that restored funding for Head Start.

No thanks, Steve!

Montana Congressman Steve Daines voted against the compromise and therefore against Head Start. Disappointing.





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Don't go if you don't know!

K-12 health insurance alert

What your local union should do right now:

- Form a health insurance committee.
- Prepare to bargain on these issues.
- Talk to your MEA-MFT field consultant.
- **Bottom line:** Don't allow any changes to your group health insurance without your local union being informed and involved. Make sure your local has a place at the table. Don't go if you don't know!



The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is causing major changes in the school health insurance market.

Bottom line: Do not let your school district change your group health insurance policy without your local union's involvement. Health insurance is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Your employer cannot make unilateral changes to your health insurance. You may have to assert your local union's right to a place at the table.

What we know right now: While this is a changing landscape, several things are clear:

► **1. Some schools might try to end group insurance policies.** "We've heard that in some schools around Montana, employers are looking at ending group insurance policies," said Diane Fladmo, MEA-MFT research director. "Instead of offering group insurance, these employers might consider increasing employees' salaries and sending them out to the new individual health care exchange to buy insurance."

At least one insurance agent is advising Montana school districts that it would be advantageous to offer coverage only for employees, Fladmo said. "This would leave their spouses and dependents to seek insurance on the new exchange."

► **2. There are serious ramifications to making these changes.**

Considerations for eliminating group health benefit plans:

- **Tax consequences:** If your employer increased your salary and sent you to buy insurance on the exchange instead of providing a group policy, the salary increase would count toward your retirement calculation, but it would be taxable. You would lose the pre-tax advantage for paying the employee portion of the premium.
- **Age consequences:** Older and more tenured employees would have to pay up to three times more than younger employees on the individual exchange. The difference could be even greater if younger employees qualify for subsidies and older employees do not.

Considerations for switching to employee-only coverage:

- Your dependents would be left to fend for themselves. They could apply for coverage on

the individual exchange, but some might not be eligible for premium tax credits.

- Premiums for older, larger families would be higher than for younger, smaller families.
- Individual exchange products are purchased with after-tax dollars, not pre-tax.
- Maximum family out-of-pocket exposure would increase.

► **3. Some small school groups will be discontinued.** Groups with under 50 participants that are now in an insured association plan will receive plan discontinuation notices prior to 2014 renewals. For example, we expect most small MSHWP schools have already received these notices. To maintain coverage, these groups will have the choice of buying an insured small group product from one of three carriers in Montana or buying from a self-funded trust, like MUST.

► **4. MUST is a viable option.** Many Montana school employee groups of all sizes are now covered under MUST, a health insurance trust endorsed by MEA-MFT, School Administrators of Montana, Montana School Boards Assoc., and Montana Rural Education Assoc.

We know this about MUST:

- MUST and Blue Cross Blue Shield have teamed up. This partnership will give school employee groups in MUST access to the "Blue" network of providers, the largest in Montana. This means more choice of doctors and hospitals for you and your family, bigger discounts, and more cost savings.
- MUST can continue to treat groups as it always has, with no Affordable Care Act group restrictions. Several positive changes under ACA do affect MUST: elimination of pre-existing condition waiting periods, elimination of lifetime benefit caps, dependent coverage to age 26, and preventive benefits paid 100% in network.

► **5. Other insurance providers** will also be pursuing Montana's k-12 school districts.

► **6. The more you know, the better!** Talk to your MEA-MFT field consultant. ■

Common Core: 'Montana is not New York'

If you're following the news on the Common Core academic standards for math and English, you've probably heard of controversy in New York State over Common Core. Despite New York's issues, Montana's public school community continues to stand united in support of these new standards.

"Montana is not New York," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. "Many New York teachers feel the standards were implemented too hastily there. Montana took a slow and thoughtful approach. Everyone in Montana's public school community has been involved: teachers, administrators, trustees, and others. We're all working together to implement the standards smoothly and on Montana's terms."

Updating Montana's academic standards is nothing new. "Montana updates its standards every few years," said Marco Ferro, MEA-MFT's public policy director. "The main difference with Montana's Common Core Standards is that they ask students to go deeper into problem-solving skills and critical thinking. Plus, these standards give parents the assurance that if their children move to another state, they'll have the knowledge they need to stay at grade level."

No high-stakes tests: New York teachers are understandably concerned about high-stakes testing and teacher evaluation being tied to test scores. But Montana has never adopted high-stakes student tests and then insisted teachers be evaluated by student test scores.

Smooth transition: One way Montana's public school community is working together to implement the new standards smoothly is through the new Montana Digital Professional Learning Network.

Funded by an Innovation Grant from AFT, one of MEA-MFT's two national affiliates, the Network provides webinars and online courses on Montana Common Core. It offers opportunities for parents and others to learn more about the standards, and it offers professional development for educators as they design and deliver classroom instruction aligned with the standards.

Some Montana schools have been using the Common Core Standards for up to two years; others are just getting started. The Network allows educators across Montana, Yaak to Ekalaka,



to share high quality teaching methods based on the new standards. The Network is a partnership including MEA-MFT, School Administrators of Montana, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Montana Digital Academy. We're all in this together, Montana's entire public school family, to give our students a world-class education.

You can see a short video about the Network at mea-mft.org/Articles/launching_the_montana_digital_professional_learning_network.aspx ■

Montana's top math & science teachers support Common Core

More than two dozen Montana winners of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching recently joined 22 Montana Teachers of the Year in publicly supporting Montana's Common Core State Standards.

These math and science teachers wrote a guest editorial that has appeared in many Montana newspapers. Here's an excerpt:

"We strongly believe in the Common Core State Standards and their promise for all students. In math, Montana's Common Core Standards focus on core topics and skills, allowing educators time to teach at a depth that has not been feasible in the past. [They] allow students the time to practice and refine skills, rather than race through standards that are a mile wide and an inch deep..."

Read the statement and see who supports it at our web site: mea-mft.org/Articles/presidential_awardees_support_common_core.aspx ■

Steady & thoughtful:

- MEA-MFT members helped write Montana's Common Core State standards, working with OPI, school administrators, trustees, and lay people.
- Montana's Board of Public Education held 12 public meetings on the standards across the state before adopting them, on the recommendation of Supt. Denise Juneau.
- Montana was the last of 46 states to adopt Common Core because folks here wanted to make sure the standards were right for Montana students.
- Montana Common Core preserves local control over curriculum.
- Montana used the right process: Start with high standards, create a curriculum that supports them, then focus on assessments aligned to what is taught and that really measure learning.



Montana Professional Teaching Foundation news

MEA-MFT's Montana Professional Teaching Foundation (MPTF) works to promote top-quality teaching and learning in Montana. Here's a round-up of recent MPTF news:

Presidential award winners

Congratulations to Melissa Romano (Helena) and Elizabeth Matthews (Gallatin Gateway), Montana winners of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). MPTF coordinates the PAEMST program in Montana.

Romano and Matthews each received \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation and joined other states' winners in Washington, DC, this March for educational and celebratory events.

Nominate now for the next PAEMST winners: Nominations are open through April 1, 2014, for science and math teachers in grades k-6. To nominate or learn more, contact Marco Ferro: mferro@mea-mft.org. Or visit www.paemst.org.

National Board achievers

Seventeen more Montana teachers have achieved National Board Certification—the highest level of professional certification a U.S. teacher can earn. Montana now has 138 National Board Certified teachers, a point of great pride.

National Board Certification is a rigorous process that takes up to nine months. MPTF helps by providing technical assistance to Montana applicants. Contact Marco Ferro for more information: mferro@mea-mft.org.

Congratulations to Montana's most recent National Board Certification achievers:

- Ashlie Buresh, Helena
- Michael Christensen, Kalispell

- Sheila Devins, Seeley Lake
- Alyson Dorr, Columbia Falls
- Jennifer Haverluk, Belgrade
- Michele Holmes, Seeley Lake
- Linda Kaps, Kalispell
- Jamie McGraw, Great Falls
- Kirsten Pevey, Kalispell
- Patricia Ritter, Bozeman
- Erica Schnee, Bozeman
- Kimberly Stout, Helena
- Chantel Thornsberry, Condon
- Ginger Vanorden, Bozeman
- Nicole Vradenburg, Belgrade
- Camla Warfle, Boulder
- Colleen Windell, Missoula

Nominate: MT Teacher of the Year

Nominations are open for the 2015 Montana Teacher of the Year. Nominees must be full-time classroom teachers or specialists with at least five years of experience. **To nominate:** Provide name, home address, nominee's school, phone number(s), e-mail address, and a brief paragraph or two about the nominee. Mail nomination(s) to MT Teacher of the Year, 1232 E. 6th, Helena, MT 59601 or e-mail dgraveley@mea-mft.org.

Deadline: April 30, 2014.

MPTF celebration/fundraiser

Despite record-breaking snowfall, more than 200 supporters of the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation gathered for a gala event at the Northern Hotel in downtown Billings February 25: "Honoring Montana's Professional Teachers." Thanks to these major sponsors: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana, Montana School Services Foundation, and MEA-MFT. ■



Melissa Romano,
presidential math winner



Elizabeth Matthews,
presidential science winner

Left photo: Some of the special guests and speakers at the MPTF celebration and fundraiser included 2014 Montana Teacher of the Year Anna Baldwin (left) and American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten. Right photo: Gov. Bullock, Supt. Denise Juneau, and others listen to Randi Weingarten. ►



MEA-MFT COPE members endorse Walsh & Lewis

Members of MEA-MFT's Committee on Political Education (COPE) have voted to endorse John Walsh for U.S. Senate and John Lewis for U.S. Congress.

COPE is made up of the elected members of MEA-MFT's board of directors. COPE members voted to endorse Walsh and Lewis after interviewing them and other known candidates who participated in COPE's candidate interview process. (Some candidates failed to respond to repeated requests for interviews.)

Both Walsh and Lewis have demonstrated strong commitment to public services, public education, and a robust middle class in Montana. Both of them support organized labor and collective bargaining. They're on our side.

JOHN WALSH: Born and raised in Butte, John Walsh has dedicated his career to public service. The son of a union pipefitter, John was the first member of his family to graduate from college. He enlisted in the National Guard as a private. He worked hard and rose through the ranks to become Adjutant General, leading the Montana National Guard.

As a battalion commander, Walsh led more than 700 men and women overseas to Iraq. As Adjutant General, he prepared Montana's service members for deployments and made sure they received the benefits they earned.

After 33 years of distinguished service, John retired from the National Guard and was elected by Montanans to the office of Lieutenant Governor, serving with Governor Steve Bullock. As Lieutenant Governor, Walsh has fought to

balance the budget, enact tax cuts for small businesses, invest in Montana's schools, and toughen laws against child abuse.

Governor Bullock appointed Walsh to fill the U.S. Senate term vacated by Max Baucus. He is therefore running for re-election to the Senate.

Walsh's wife of 29 years, Janet, an MEA-MFT member, has been a paraeducator in Helena public schools for 17 years. They have two grown sons and a granddaughter.

More info: johnwalsh2014.com

JOHN LEWIS: John Lewis is a fourth generation Montanan, born in Billings to a working-class family and raised in Billings and Missoula. He has deep roots in public service in Montana: His mother was a teacher and Forest Service employee who later started her own small business. His father was a land planner. His stepdad is a former smokejumper who spent a career with the Forest Service.

While in college in Missoula, Lewis began his own career in public service by working as a consumer protection advocate in the Attorney General's office. He later worked for Montana U.S. Senator Max Baucus. Lewis's role as a listener and problem solver has brought him to every community in Montana. He helped make sure seniors received their Social Security checks; that small, rural communities got the resources they needed for essential services; and that businesses had what they needed to create good-paying jobs.

Lewis and his wife, Melissa, have two small children.

More info: montanansforlewis.com ■



John Walsh for U.S. Senate:
Born & raised in Butte.



John Lewis for U.S. House:
4th generation Montanan

Expanding health care coverage for 70,000 Montanans: I-170

During the 2013 Montana Legislature, thousands of Montana citizens tried to convince the legislative majority to pass a bill expanding health care coverage for Montanans by accepting federal funding to expand Medicaid.

MEA-MFT joined the effort. No one testified against the bill except an out-of-state right-wing group called Americans for Prosperity. But the legislative majority failed to pass the bill.

Now, a coalition of Montana citizen groups is collecting signatures to get an initiative on the November ballot (Initiative 170) to do what the legislature failed to do. I-170 will expand Medic-

aid eligibility to include 70,000 Montanans (40,000 of whom are working people) whose incomes are less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level. For a single person, this means earning less than \$15,857 per year. For a family of three, it means earning less than \$26,951 per year.

I-170 would help Montanans like veterans, single parents, and low-income working families who have no other coverage. I-170 would bring in nearly \$6 billion in federal funds to Montana between now and 2021. This would create 12,000 jobs in our state annually and be a big boon to Montana's rural hospitals. ■

MEA-MFT COPE candidate endorsements are based strictly on issues, not on political party. COPE represents the spectrum of MEA-MFT members: state and local government employees, educators, and health care employees who live all over Montana.

Troubleshooting & reasoning: Amazing member Steve Lewis

MEA-MFT member Steve Lewis is a composition and literature instructor at Helena College University of Montana, formerly the UM Helena College of Technology. Steve serves on the negotiations team for his local union, the Helena Teachers Union, and he's part of the labor-management committee at the two-year college, helping anticipate and resolve issues between staff and management. He also serves as president of the faculty senate.

Steve is a high-energy, jovial guy who exchanges good-natured banter with nearly every student he encounters in the halls at Helena College. He is passionately serious about their education, though. Here's what else we learned about Steve Lewis:

What I do and why it matters: I tell my students I'm a salesman, selling them something they don't want to buy: writing. The better you can communicate in the written word, the better off you'll be in this world. I try to get them

to understand that thinking critically in terms of solving problems, especially unforeseen ones, makes you a valuable employee. Troubleshooting, reasoning, communication skills—they all make you valuable in any job.

It matters because these students are going to be in charge someday. I want to know when I die that there are people who can make judgments based on evidence and reasoning, not emotional snap judgments based on what Fox News says. If you can energize and engage your brain in thinking and learning skills, you'll be better at every aspect of life.

I'm not turning out writers and journalists, but I hope I'm turning out people who are better off after taking my class.

What I love about the job: Interactions with students, seeing the light bulbs pop. Interacting with really good colleagues.

Toughest part of the job: When my desire for my students' education outweighs theirs—that's frustrating. When



Steve Lewis at Helena College

I see the same 15 staff members show up for everything. We're all stretched so thin, but if you're not going to be part of the solution, don't complain to me about the problem.

Why I belong to MEA-MFT: If you're not part of the process, you deny your ability to effect positive change.

What I do for fun: My wife and I like to hike and cook. We enjoy our dog, a Norwegian elkhound rescue dog. We love to travel, mostly for concerts. Music is my escape.

Good book I've read lately: *Irrational Man* by William Barrett. I'm looking to develop an Intro to Existentialism class. I'm also re-reading *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson.

Thanks, Steve, to you and your colleagues for doing Work that Matters for Montana's students and our future! ■

Coming soon: A new look for our union newsletter...

