

Today

MEA-MFT

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

'A revolution of the mind & human spirit' Tom Pedersen: Montana Teacher of the Year 2012

Tom Pedersen didn't set out to be a teacher. From an early age, he wanted to be a doctor. But when a serious illness interrupted his medical school career, he took a temporary job teaching science at Capital High School in Helena to pay his medical school loans.

Pedersen had no intention of staying. He planned to return to medical school, but "life is what happens when you are busy making other plans," he said, quoting John Lennon. "I fell in love with kids and teaching."

So Pedersen stayed at Capital High, devoting the next 35 years to his students and fellow teachers. "I never looked back," he said.

Along the way, Pedersen has prepared many students to become doctors themselves—and nurses, ecologists, biologists, and chemists. He has earned an eye-popping list of awards for teaching and coaching track and field. This September, he added Montana's top teaching honor to the list when was named Montana Teacher of the Year for 2012.

"It's humbling," Pedersen said. "We have so many outstanding teachers in this state." He credits his colleagues at Capital High School, from administrators to support staff, for "allowing us all to be the best teachers we can be. This is Capital High's award."

The Montana Teacher of the Year program, administered by the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation, annually recognizes a teacher who exemplifies the best in the teaching profession. An interview committee composed of 2011 Montana Teacher of the Year Paul An-



ALANA LISTOE PHOTO, HELENA I.R.

Montana Teacher of the Year Tom Pedersen talks to his Honors Biology students about documenting their water quality observations at Gould Creek near Helena.

dersen, other educators, a parent, a high school student, and representatives from the Montana Board of Public Education and Office of Public Instruction chose Pedersen from among three finalists.

A sense of wonder: Pedersen teaches Honors Biology II (a dual-credit anatomy and physiology class through the University of Montana) and Science Seminar. He greets his students every day with humor, enthusiasm, and high expectations, aiming to motivate them to become "life-long learners, passionate about this planet, and to stay curious, motivated, and filled with a sense of wonder."

"He teaches much more than science," said Capital High Principal Elisabeth Hudnutt. "He teaches students how to

become contributing members of society and critical thinkers and voters."

Former student Aaron Reynolds said Pedersen ("T-Ped," as students affectionately call him) is "unmatched in his (Continued on p. 7)

Good insurance news for state employees

As all state employees now know, MEA-MFT, the Montana Public Employees Association, and AFSCME have worked out a deal with Governor Schweitzer to freeze increases in out-of-pocket state employee health insurance costs for the next plan year.

(Continued on p. 4)

Help us!

BY ERIC FEAVER
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT



Eric Feaver updates state employees on the state pay plan unfair labor practice during the unions' Public Employees Appreciation Picnic, state capitol, September 15.

To our state employee members: Hang in there. You have suffered more than enough at the hands of the 2011 Tea Party dominated legislature that apparently wished you would all just go away.

There was absolutely NO fiscal justification for the legislature to freeze your base salaries for two more years. None whatsoever. Montana has plenty of cash in the bank. You should be very angry.

So, help us—your union. Help us recruit, support, and elect a legislature that respects the work you do and wants to reward the everyday contributions you make to the quality of life all Montanans have come to expect.

To our university faculty members: Good for you.

You are making progress at your respective bargaining unit tables. But had this same Tea Party dominated legislature cared

about student and family debt, it would have appropriated sufficient and available funds to preclude the need for the board of regents to step in with a big increase in student tuition.

So, help us—your union. Help us recruit, support, and elect a legislature that believes the insidious privatization of public higher education is a frontal assault on low and middle income families as they and their children strive for something better at a price they can afford.

To our k-12 public school teacher members: YOU are at serious risk.

Yes, YOU.

As you know, this very year, Tea Party dominated legislatures across this nation terminated teacher tenure; blew up teacher retirement defined benefit plans; mandated merit pay; expanded school privatization through tax credits, pay vouchers, and charter schools; and knifed collective bargaining in the back.

At one point or another, to a greater or lesser degree, the Tea Party dominated 2011 Montana Legislature entertained every last one of these radical, anti-government, anti-public school, anti-teacher ideas.

So, help us—your union. Help us recruit, support, and elect a legislature that believes a war on teachers and public schools will do absolutely nothing to better educate our children and enhance our school communities. Nothing.

To all our members: Your union, MEA-MFT, has never wavered one iota in defense and promotion of the quality work you do that matters, your salaries, your health care, and your retirement.

But your union is no abstraction. Your union is YOU. You and I and all of us must now stand united together or we will go the way of Florida or Idaho or Wisconsin.

Required reading: MEA-MFT Voting Record. If you haven't read this yet...read it now. Go to www.mea-mft.org and click on "Legislative Action" at the top of the home page.

Here you will find unbiased, unadulterated results. Notwithstanding curious, self-serving complaints to the contrary, legislators earn their voting records all by themselves. It is your duty to see what they have earned.

And then, help us recruit, support, and elect a legislature dramatically different from the 2011 Tea Party dominated legislature that chose harm first.

Want to help and don't know where to start? E-mail me—efeaver@mea-mft.org—and I will get you going. ■

'Your union is no abstraction. Your union is YOU. You and I and all of us must now stand united together or we will go the way of Florida or Idaho or Wisconsin.'

Standing together, standing strong: NEA Rep. Assembly

Several dozen MEA-MFT members served as delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) in Chicago, July 1-5. They joined thousands of other NEA members from around the country to help set policy and direction for our national affiliate.

Public employee members debut: Among MEA-MFT's delegation were the first two public employee delegates ever to attend an NEA RA: Dani Tenneson and Jill Cohenour. As a result of action at last year's RA, MEA-MFT's public employee members now have full membership rights in NEA.

"This is a very big deal," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. "Ever since the former MEA and MFT merged 11 years ago, we have worked to gain full membership rights for our members who are not educators. These members have enjoyed full rights with our other national affiliate, AFT, all along. Now, finally, they are completely integrated into the NEA family."

Cohenour is president of MEA-MFT's Dept. of Public Health and Human Services local. Tenneson is a member of MEA-MFT's Dept. of Revenue local.

"RA was fantastic," said Tenneson. "For me, it was an extremely important learning experience. I hope to relay to my local members how important it is to get involved at the national level. We're all public employees. Working together makes us stronger. We have to stick up for unions and union rights."

Action packed: This year's RA was action packed, following as it did on the heels of unprecedented attacks on unions, public employees, public education, and working families nationwide. NEA President Dennis Van Roekel kicked off the RA with a call for NEA members to stand strong in the face of the attacks.

Among other actions, RA delegates honored the "Wisconsin 14," the state senators who defied Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and left the state rather than vote for a bill that would weaken collective bargaining for Wisconsin public employees.

Delegates voted to bolster NEA's crisis fund



Some of the 9,000+ delegates show solidarity at the 2011 NEA "Standing Strong" Representative Assembly in Chicago.

to help strengthen affiliates against the kinds of attacks public services and public education have faced this year in Wisconsin, Ohio, New Jersey, Idaho, Tennessee, Florida, and other states.

Delegates also re-elected NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and Vice President Lily Eskelsen.

You can read more about RA, see photos, and watch some dynamite videos of RA action at www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm. ■

MEA-MFT regional training

MEA-MFT's regional trainings continue! Members statewide have given these sessions rave reviews, as they learn skills in contracts and collective bargaining, conflict resolution, communicating, member rights, leadership, and much more.

Mark your calendar: You'll find upcoming regional training sessions listed below. More training sessions are added periodically, so check the MEA-MFT calendar often: www.mea-mft.org.

- Nov. 4-5, 2011: East Regional Training: Dawson County High School
- Feb. 10-11, 2012: North Central Regional Training, Great Falls

To view agendas and download registration forms, visit www.mea-mft.org/Articles/mea-mft_regional_trainings.aspx ■

Insurance cost freeze (from p. 1)

On average, the agreement will save each state employee \$462 in projected health insurance cost increases. The insurance premium freeze also applies to retired state employees who stay on the state health insurance plan.

The unions negotiated the freeze in August, when they learned of a potential 5 percent annual hike in state employee premium payments, along with higher deductibles.

“It’s just plain wrong to saddle state employees with that kind of increase when Montana has an estimated ending fund balance of \$426 million,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

So MEA-MFT sat down with Governor Schweitzer, MPEA, and AFSCME and negotiated a one-year premium freeze. “The governor agreed that it’s wrong to make state employees pay more

when the legislature just handed them another two-year pay freeze,” Feaver said.

“Since the 2011 Legislature failed to pass the state pay plan, MEA-MFT has been looking at all possible ways to take some financial pressure off of our state employee members,” said MEA-MFT Executive Director Erik Burke. “The health insurance premium freeze is one of them. Our

unfair labor practice charge is another.” (See story below.)

The premium freeze will allow more time to address issues facing the state health insurance plan, Feaver said.

“With state revenues growing and the federal Affordable Health Care Act bound to cause changes in the health care system nationwide, we need to see how these things shake out before the state makes major changes in the plan.” ■

State pay plan ULP: Breaking update

As we go to press, a hearing officer appointed by the Montana Board of Personnel Appeals has announced that MEA-MFT’s unfair labor practice charge (ULP) should be dismissed and has cancelled the October 6-7 hearing.

MEA-MFT and our fellow unions, MPEA and AFSCME, filed the ULP in May. It charges that the state failed to bargain in good faith when the 2011 Legislature delayed action on HB 13, the state pay plan, until the very end of the legislative session, leaving no time for the unions to negotiate a new proposal to submit. On the next-to-last day of the session, the legislature killed the bill in premeditated cold blood. The 2011 Legislature chose not to pass HB 13 even though the state had the money (now over \$420 million) for the pay plan’s modest salary increase.

The hearing officer concluded that by statute, once a deal is negotiated, ratification is up to the legislature, and there can’t be a charge of failure

(Continued on p. 5)

State employees at the Public Employees Appreciation Picnic sign up for updates on the unions’ unfair labor practice charge. MEA-MFT, MPEA, and AFSCME held the picnic Sept. 15 at the state capitol. About 1,500 public employees attended.



6 ways your MEA-MFT membership works for YOU

1 CLOUT. 18,000 members strong, MEA-MFT has influence to represent you at the state legislature, retirement boards, boards of education and regents, and everywhere decisions are made about your job and the people you serve. We are Montana’s strongest voice for working people, education, and strong public services.

2 WE’VE GOT YOUR BACK. MEA-MFT protects your workplace rights and makes sure you get fair treatment on the job. MEA-MFT’s expert field staff help our local affiliates bargain contracts, deal with labor-management issues, and make sure you get legal help if you need it. Located around Montana, field staff are just a phone call away.

3 NETWORKING. Through MEA-MFT conferences, rallies, and communications, you are connected to other public employees and educators across the state and nation who are dealing with the same issues as you. We all work together to improve public services, public education, and our members’ working conditions.

MEA-MFT fights for Corrections members

When the going gets tough, the tough get creative. For MEA-MFT and our state employee members, 2011 has been a creative year indeed.

First came MEA-MFT's unprecedented unfair labor practice charge against the state and the health insurance premium freeze MEA-MFT bargained with the governor (see pages 1 and 4).

Then MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver filed the first-ever statewide grievance against the Montana Dept. of Corrections for renegeing on its salary advancement process.

The process, guaranteeing a six-step salary increase for employees who meet certain training requirements, is contained in five contracts the department holds with MEA-MFT affiliates: Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge, Probation and Parole statewide, Women's Prison in Billings, Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility in Miles City, and Riverside Youth Correctional Facility in Boulder.

The five contracts came up for renewal in July, as they do every other year. This year, though, the department announced it would not honor the salary advancement process until new contracts are ratified.

The department claims the contracts have expired, therefore the salary deal is moot.

"That's hogwash," said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver. "When a contract comes up for renewal, it rolls over and remains in effect until a successor contract is negotiated. Neither management nor the union can pick and choose

which parts of the contract to honor."

In response, MEA-MFT helped each of the five local affiliates file a grievance against the department. In addition, Feaver took the groundbreaking step August 27 of filing a statewide grievance. "MEA-MFT is not going to sit back and watch our members get abused this way," said Feaver. "We're jumping in to help them."

"This is historic for MEA-MFT," said MEA-MFT Field Consultant Larry Nielsen, who serves members in Probation and Parole and the State Prison. "We've never done a statewide grievance before. It's basically a class action grievance."

If MEA-MFT wins, the department will have to start paying the salary increases immediately, along with back pay retroactive to July.

The Dept. of Corrections claims MEA-MFT has no authority to file the statewide grievance. MEA-MFT counters that it does have the authority, because all five contracts name MEA-MFT in the recognition clause.

"We're not waiting for new contracts," Feaver said. "The contracts guarantee the salary steps now, and we're going to fight for them now."

Watch for updates at www.mea-mft.org. Click on "Public Employee News." ■

ULP (from p. 4)

to bargain in good faith. The unions disagree and will appeal. Watch for updates at www.mea-mft.org under "Breaking News." ■

'Neither management nor the union can pick and choose which parts of the contract to honor.'

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6 ways continued...

4 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH. MEA-MFT's training sessions help you succeed in every aspect of your job, whether it's bargaining a contract, classroom management, political action, communications, or almost any other area of interest.

5 COST-SAVING MEMBER BENEFITS. Through the buying power of our two national affiliates, NEA and AFT, all MEA-MFT members are eligible for incredible deals on insurance, mobile phone plans, home financing, and much more. More on page 12.

6 YOU TALK, WE LISTEN. MEA-MFT exists for our members. We respond to your needs. MEA-MFT is a grassroots organization run by and for its members. Every member has a vote and unrestricted access to every level of MEA-MFT governance: local, state, and national.



You're invited: Head Start Academy

For the first time, MEA-MFT will host a Head Start Academy during the MEA-MFT Educators' Conference this year, providing professional development created specifically for Montana's Head Start employees.

The academy is free of charge for MEA-MFT Head Start members.

Great Falls Head Start teachers and MEA-MFT members Shannon Bender and Colleen Kivi will present sectionals on early childhood language development.

"I am really excited that we are offering a component for early childhood educators," Bender said. "I'm encouraging everybody who works in early childhood education to come. There will be lots of great information, and it will be a good time for early childhood educators to get together, share, brainstorm, and talk about what we do every day."

The MEA-MFT Educators' Con-

ference takes place October 20-21, 2011, in Missoula. You can read more about the event on page 11.

The Head Start Academy will focus on how to work effectively with parents and caregivers. It will provide tools for working effectively with Head Start management. Other topics include understanding Head Start regulations, a curriculum discussion using existing Head Start curricula from around Montana, and presentations of best practices.

Along with the academy, Head Start teachers and staff will find tons of sectionals at the Educators' Conference on oral language development, special education, classroom discipline, preschool curriculum, and many others that pertain to early childhood education.

Sign up now! MEA-MFT invites all Head Start and early childhood educators to attend. Go to www.mea-mft.org/educators_conference.aspx to pre-register for the Educators' Conference and Head Start Academy. Registration fees are waived for MEA-MFT Head Start members. ■



Head Start supporters state their case at our Feb. 21 rally at the capitol.



MEA-MFT retirement readiness forums

Ready, Aim, Retire! If you're looking forward to a happy, healthy retirement, you need to take ownership of your retirement planning. It's never too early to start.

What can you expect from your Teachers or Public Employees Retirement System plans? What practical steps should you take to get ready for retirement? What changes were made by the 2011 Legislature? How can you get involved in the legislative process affecting your pension?

What about health insurance following retirement? Should you stay on the old employer plan, join your partner's plan, or wait for "health exchanges" coming in 2013-14?

Does NEA Member Benefits or AFT Plus Member Benefits have something to offer for

long-term care or MedSupp insurance?

MEA-MFT's retirement forums will provide answers to all these questions and more.

Retirement forum schedule:

- Oct. 5: Bozeman, Bozeman High School, Old Library Meeting Room, 4-6 P.M.
- Oct. 6: Billings, Lincoln Center Board Room, 415 N. 30th 4:30-6:30 P.M.
- Oct. 11: Great Falls, GFPS Admin. Building, 1100 4th Street S, 4:30-6:15 P.M.
- Oct. 21: Missoula, (as part of MEA-MFT Educators' Conference) Band Room, Sentinel High School 8:30-11 A.M.

More forums will be scheduled for Glendive and Havre. Check the calendar at www.mea-mft.org for updates. ■

Tom Pedersen, Montana Teacher of the Year

(from p. 1)

ability to set a mind in motion.” Pedersen reaches all students, said Reynolds, “from some of the most troubled, struggling academic scholars to highly intellectual minds requiring significant challenge.”

“I give students my time,” Pedersen said. “My door is always open. I push students to their limits while reassuring them that their hard work will pay off and they will succeed.”

Antidote to nature deficit disorder: Pedersen also pushes students out of doors and into the natural world. His Honors Biology II students work in the field monitoring water quality and forest health. They record their data using the scientific method and write stewardship management papers. They also learn to listen and read at the college level, working on high-tech DNA and human physiology and anatomy labs.

Pedersen’s Science Seminar students tackle hot-button science issues and learn the Socratic method, where they are encouraged to question any viewpoint or guest speaker as long as they do it respectfully. The class culminates in field trips to Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and Lewis & Clark Caverns.

“I really feel you can learn about nature, from nature, in nature,” Pedersen said. Plus, he sees nature as an antidote to the symptoms of “nature deficit disorder” in kids: anxiety, stress, ADHD, obesity, suicide, and depression. “Kids who spend five to eight hours a day in front of a screen or text thousands of messages are not getting outside,” he said, adding that time in nature can calm, focus, and relax students and make their education relevant, interesting, and fun.

Pedersen’s teaching continues through the summer, working with students and teachers through the Helena National Forest Youth Forest Monitoring Program and Forest For Every Classroom. He has spent countless hours helping other teachers improve their teaching methods and rapport with students.

He credits his own mentors with his success in teaching: the Capital High science teachers who urged him to stick with teaching 34 years ago: Harlan Coverdell, Marilyn Alexander, Pat Johnson, and Ron Elliott. “They took me under

their wing,” he said. He credits his father, too, another teacher/coach and “a great role model.”

As Montana Teacher of the Year, Pedersen will act as an ambassador for the teaching profession, telling the public about success stories in Montana’s classrooms.

He wants to encourage fellow teachers to “start a revolution of the mind and human spirit with students, guiding them to redesign designs, reinvent inventions, and think their way out of the problems we have placed upon their generation.”

Teacher of the Year finalists: Finalists in the 2012 Montana Teacher of the Year event are Amy Konen, a literacy, math, and reading intervention teacher at Mountain View Elementary in Great Falls, and Beth Thomas, a science teacher at North Middle School in Great Falls.

Pedersen, Konen, and Thomas, all MEA-MFT members, will be honored at a celebration October 20 in Missoula in conjunction with the annual MEA-MFT Educators’ Conference. (Details on page 11.) Congratulations to all three of these outstanding teachers!

You can learn more about Tom Pedersen, see video clips of him in action, and hear radio interviews at www.mea-mft.org. ■

Teacher of the Year finalists

Above: Beth Thomas, below: Amy Konen, both of Great Falls.



Paul Andersen, national Teacher of the Year finalist

Kudos to MEA-MFT member and 2011 Montana Teacher of the Year Paul Andersen of Bozeman, who was chosen as one of four finalists in this year’s National Teacher of the Year event. Michelle Shearer of Maryland was ultimately chosen National Teacher of the Year. ■



Denise Juneau vs. No Child Left Behind



Denise Juneau: “We consider what happened this year a win.”

‘In the tradition of Nancy Keenan and Linda McCulloch, Denise showed the way for the rest of the nation.’

Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau made national headlines recently by going toe-to-toe with the federal No Child Left Behind act (NCLB)—a law widely criticized as heavy handed, rigid, and punitive.

For a decade, NCLB has held students and educators hostage to high-stakes testing and the requirement that schools have 100 percent of students proficient in math and reading by 2014, regardless of students’ abilities and backgrounds.

The law penalizes schools that don’t make “Adequate Yearly Progress,” as measured by annual tests, and labels them as failures.

“NCLB guarantees that all schools will eventually ‘fail,’ because the goalposts continually move,” said MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver.

This April, Juneau told U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan that Montana would not jump through NCLB’s hoops.

With 155 additional Montana schools slated to “fail,” including schools that had made good progress in student achievement, Juneau told Duncan that Montana would not raise its testing targets as the law requires.

“We’re not asking permission,” Juneau said at the time. “We’re just telling them we won’t raise our annual objectives this year.”

Despite warnings that Montana would lose significant federal funding, Juneau stuck to her guns—and prevailed. She and Duncan worked out a compromise that allowed all but 16 of the schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress, with no loss of federal funding.

Juneau’s moxie caught the attention of the *New York Times* and other major news outlets. It also sparked a movement: three other Western states soon followed her lead, refusing to raise the testing bar.

The uprising culminated September 23 with President Obama’s announcement that states could apply for waivers from the 100 percent proficiency requirement—if they develop plans to close achievement gaps, raise standards, and create a system to evaluate educators based on

student performance. “We’ll have to see the details of the waivers,” Juneau cautioned. “They look eerily familiar—very similar to Race to the Top requirements.” Race to the Top is the Obama administration’s plan for school improvement, which most educators believe still focuses too much on one test and a one-size-fits-all approach.

In any case, Juneau said, “We’ve gained a lot by showing that our state has great educational outcomes already. Teachers are doing a great job, and we can demonstrate it through data. We consider what happened this year a win. NCLB has served its purpose. It’s time to move on.”

“Denise Juneau stared NCLB down,” said Feaver. “In the tradition of former Montana superintendents Nancy Keenan and Linda McCulloch, Denise showed the way for the rest of the nation.” ■

Foundation news

‘Fore’ Kids & Education: The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation’s 8th annual Golf Scramble was a big success. The golf scramble took place on a perfect summer day, August 4, 2011, at the Green Meadow Country Club in Helena. The event is a fundraiser (and fun-raiser) for the foundation.

Congratulations to the winners! First Place Gross: Great Falls Education Association. First Place Net: Hagen’s Hackers. Thanks to all who participated, and thanks to the many businesses, groups, and individuals who sponsored holes and prizes. See you next year!

Karen Cox Grants: Are you thinking about shelling out your own money for a classroom project or equipment? Consider applying for a Karen Cox Memorial Grant instead.

Named in honor of one of Montana’s great teachers, these grants are not intended to replace regular school funding, but rather to help educators who reach into their own pockets for classroom supplies and projects.

The grant application deadline is October 31. To apply for a grant, visit www.mea-mft.org/our_foundation/programs/karen_cox_memorial_grants.aspx. ■

New polls show strong support for teachers

Take heart, teachers. Americans love you, and they're on your side. More than ever. Despite films like *Waiting For 'Superman,'* despite negative national headlines, despite the vocal minority who criticize teachers, Americans' respect for public school teachers is strong and growing stronger. Those are key findings from two new national polls: the 2011 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools and a poll by the National Education Association.

The PDK/Gallup poll shows Americans respect the teaching profession, support better funding for schools, and reject tax-funded vouchers for private school tuition, although they do support school choice within the public school system. The poll shows more than 70 percent of respondents say they have "trust and confidence" in the men and women who are teaching.

The NEA poll shows similar results, with most Americans in the "cheerleaders for teach-

ers" column. Americans overwhelmingly believe everyone, not just teachers, must work together to improve schools, including students, parents, and elected officials, the poll finds.

Also, most Americans have a bad taste in their mouths about standardized testing. They believe public schools are crucial to economic development; teachers are the experts when it comes to knowing what's good for students; and struggling teachers should be mentored, not tossed out.

"Americans' strong support for teachers and public schools is all the more heartening given that more than two-thirds of respondents say they hear more bad news about education than good news," said AFT President Randi Weingarten, speaking of the PDK/Gallup poll.

The take-home lesson? Americans get it. They are paying more attention to what is really happening in schools than national headline writers. And that's good news. ■



MSU-Bozeman members close in on first contracts

MEA-MFT members at Montana State University-Bozeman have nearly finished bargaining their first contracts.

MEA-MFT has two local units at MSU-Bozeman: tenure track and non-tenure track. MEA-MFT Field Consultant Tom Burgess has been working with the two units simultaneously on their contracts.

"Our bargaining teams have been working overtime to secure good agreements," he said. "We believe that when they're completed, faculty will overwhelmingly support the contracts."

The MSU units organized and joined MEA-MFT two years ago. As a result, all faculty at Montana's public higher education campuses are now part of the MEA-MFT family.

"We're working to secure language in the contracts giving faculty a strong voice in issues like due process, promotions, transfers, and working conditions," Burgess said. "I'm proud

of our members and bargaining teams for the work they've done." ■

MEA-MFT works with regents to prioritize salaries

When the 2011 Montana Legislature left the state university system with a \$21 million funding gap, despite having enough money in state coffers to avoid any cuts, the state Board of Regents was forced to patch the funding hole by raising tuition.

MEA-MFT has worked extensively with the regents and Commissioner of Higher Education Sheila Stearns to put university and faculty salaries first. "Montana faculty salaries already are among the lowest in the nation," said Tom Burgess, MEA-MFT's field consultant for higher education locals. "The regents agree that we have to do everything we can to keep our high quality faculty members here." ■

Everyday HEROES

Nominate an inspiring member and enter to win **\$250!** Go to: aft.org/everydayheroes

NEA Foundation grants available

Congratulations to MEA-MFT member Daisy Rooks, a professor at the University of Montana, who recently won an NEA Foundation grant to "examine individuals who have taken 'alternative' pathways into the teaching profession."

Is there an NEA Foundation grant in *your future*? Visit www.neafoundation.org/ and find out. Higher education and k-12 educators are both eligible for the grants.



ALEC: the secret front group behind the bad legislation



Graphic from the ALEC Exposed web site: www.alecexposed.org.

‘Who is spoon-feeding ready-made bills to Tea Party legislators in Montana, Wisconsin, and other states, passing them off as “grassroots” ideas? Meet ALEC.’

Who is behind efforts to kill public employee pensions, destroy teacher tenure, and turn over public services to private, for-profit corporations?

Who is spoon-feeding ready-made bills to Tea Party legislators in Montana, Wisconsin, and other states, passing them off as “grassroots” ideas?

Meet ALEC, a secretive front group whose secrets have come to light lately. A nonprofit investigative reporting group called The Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) recently blew ALEC’s cover, unveiling more than 800 “model” bills and resolutions secretly supported by global corporations and state politicians through the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

These so-called model bills often directly benefit huge corporations. ALEC has written measures that limit workers’ rights, drain labor unions of resources for protecting employees, undermine consumer protections, funnel tax dollars to for-profit corporations through privatization schemes, and push the “free trade” agenda that has shipped American jobs overseas.

A new web site called ALEC Exposed—www.alecexposed.org—details the model bills and the corporations backing ALEC, including the infamous Koch Brothers. ALEC-written bills have been introduced in legislatures in every state. “Several bills were introduced in Montana’s 2011 session that were nearly direct copies of ALEC

model bills,” said MEA-MFT Policy Director Marco Ferro. The bills include a special education voucher bill (HB 591), private charter school bill (HB 603), and a bill opting Montana out of federal health care reform (HB 206).

“I’ve heard legislators claim that an idea for a bill just ‘came to them,’ but when I checked it out, it turned out to be almost word-for-word from ALEC,” said MEA-MFT Political Director Terry Minow.

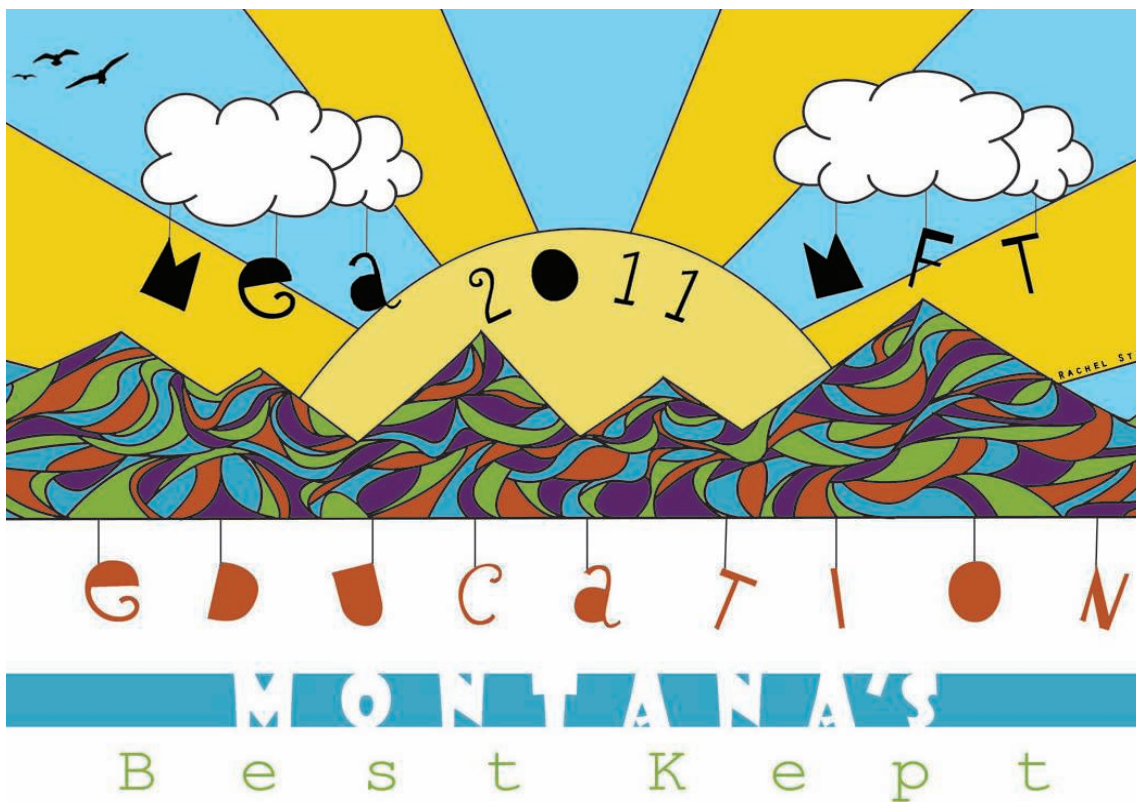
ALEC in Montana: ALEC Exposed lists the following Montana legislators who are involved with ALEC:

- Former Rep. Dennis Himmelberger (R-Billings) former ALEC State Chair
- Rep. David Howard (R-Park City)
- Rep. Gary MacLaren (R-Victor) State Chair
- Rep. Ken Peterson (R-Billings)
- Rep. Scott Reichner (R-Bigfork) State Chair
- Rep. Cary Smith (R-Billings)
- Rep. Wendy Warburton (R-Havre)
- Rep. Roy Hollandsworth (R-Brady)
- Rep. Bill Beck (R-Whitefish)
- Rep. Elsie Arntzen (R-Billings)
- Rep. Jesse O’Hara (R-Great Falls)
- Rep. Dan Skattum (R-Livingston)
- Rep. Mark Blasdel (R-Sommers)
- Rep. Gordon Hendrick (R-Superior)
- Rep. Lee Randall (R-Broadus)
- Rep. John Esp (R-Big Timber)
- Rep. Liz Bangerter (R-Helena)
- Rep. Steve Lavin (R-Kalispell)
- Rep. Tom McGillvray (R-Billings)
- Former Rep. Dee Brown (R-Hungry Horse)
- Rep. Michael More (R-Gallatin Gateway)
- Rep. Mike Miller (R-Helmville)
- Sen. Jeff Essmann (R-Billings)
- Sen. Bob Lake (R-Hamilton)
- Sen. Llew Jones (R-Conrad)
- Former Sen. Roy Brown (R-Billings)

See which ALEC committees these legislators sit on and learn more about ALEC at www.alecexposed.org. Watch news clips on ALEC at www.mea-mft.org/Articles/alec_outed_the_right-wing_conspiracy_behind_bad_bills.aspx. ■

What YOU can do about ALEC

- 1 LOOK UP** www.alecexposed.org. Join the conversation at [facebook.com/CenterforMediaandDemocracy](https://www.facebook.com/CenterforMediaandDemocracy). Learn more about ALEC.
- 2 SPEAK UP** by telling friends and colleagues about ALEC’s antics. E-mail Sanna Porte at sporte@mea-mft.org for information on how to write a great letter to the editor that supports public services and public education.
- 3 STAND UP.** E-mail Terry Minow at tminow@mea-mft.org to be an MEA-MFT activist who will take action to support quality public education, quality public services, and the people who do work that matters.



Secret

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3. Click on the picture of the MEA-MFT membership card. (Pictured at right).
4. You will see a listing of your many benefits. One of them is NEA "Click & Save." Follow the links indicated, depending on whether you're a first-time Click & Save user or a returning customer.
5. Scroll on down the Member Benefits page and take a look at offerings from NEA Member Benefits and AFT+ Member Benefits.
6. You can also go straight to the NEA and AFT member benefits web sites:

- www.neamb.com
- www.aft.org/benefits/

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