

State employees march to the capitol Feb. 16 to talk about the state pay plan. Photo by MEA-MFT member Kelly Johnson Hamel.



Winter 2015 Vol 17 No 1 www.mea-mft.org

MEA-MFT today

A publication for members of MEA-MFT

Fighting for public schools & services at the legislature

Montana's 2015 legislature is at the halfway mark. It has been a tough session. MEA-MFT leaders, staff, and members are front and center at the legislature every day.

On the proactive front, we are working to: pass the state pay plan, support early childhood education, maintain adequate funding for state agencies and public schools, "Build Montana" through cash and bonds, and help expand Medicaid to cover more low-income Montanans.

We are also playing big-time defense: fighting privatization of our public schools, public services, and pensions; fighting elimination of Montana's Common Core Standards and attacks on the Board of Public Education; and stopping attacks on the right of public employees to organize and bargain collectively.

Below is a look at our priority bills:

MEA-MFT supports:

- **Early Edge in HB 2:** Governor Bullock's proposal for voluntary public preschool for four-year-olds. Contained in HB 2, the bill that funds most of state government.
- **HB 5 (Welborn):** Governor Bullock's Build Montana plan to create jobs with bonds and cash. Invests millions of dollars in infrastructure across Montana including Bakken oil-impacted communities and Montana Historical Society.
- **HB 13 (Swanson):** State and University Employee Pay Plan, the agreement negotiated with Governor Bullock. 50 cents an hour pay increase per year plus increases in insurance contributions.
- **HB 27 (Hayman):** School inflationary increases. Has passed the legislature and been signed into law.
- **SB 12 (Moe):** Provides school funding for 19-year-olds who have not yet graduated high school.



State employees head to the capitol to talk about the state pan plan.

- **HB 249 (Noonan):** Medicaid expansion to provide health care for 70,000 uninsured Montanans, almost entirely with federal funds.

We oppose:

- Public dollars being used to fund private/sectarian education:

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A new look for our union newsletter

This issue, we debut the newly redesigned MEA-MFT Today. We hope you enjoy the updated look!



Join us at MEA-MFT's 2015 Rep. Assembly in Helena March 27-28. More on p. 4.



State employees file into the capitol for our union Pay Plan Day of Action. Kelly Johnson Hamel photo

2015 Legislature

(From p. 1)

HBs 322 (D. Jones), 433 (Berglee), 511 (Tschida), and 596 (Knudsen).

- Elimination of Montana's Common Core Standards and attacks on the Board of Public Education: HBs 377 and 501 (Lamm).

- Secession of elementary school districts from high school districts: SB 107 (T. Brown). SB 107 negatively impacts Billings, Helena, and Missoula. SB 107 is the only bill ever introduced into the state legislature that would divest one school district of its students, property, tax base, programs, services, and staff to create or benefit another school district.

- Guns in our public schools: HBs 298 (Harris) and SB 143 (C. Smith).

- Assaults on the right of public employees to organize and bargain collectively: SB 351 (Blasdel). Good news: we have put HB 462 (Wittich) to rest!

- Numerous proposals to cut revenue needed to invest in public schools and public services.

- Underfunding and privatization

of state services as contained in the current version of HB 2 (Ballance), the general appropriations act.

Where we stand at half time

One of our top priority bills, the state employee pay plan, HB 13 (Swanson), has still not been scheduled for a hearing. State employees have participated in two statewide

days of action and several other mobilization events, standing in the hallways of the capitol to ask, "Where is HB 13?" No other pay proposal has been drafted by the majority party.

K-12 school funding is coming through the front door in SB 27 (Hayman), but how much money might go out the back door to fund private, religious, and unregulated schools?



State employees meet with Gov. Bullock about the pay plan. "My name is Steve," he said. "I'm a state employee." The governor is a key ally in getting HB 13 passed.

Our conclusion? Elections matter. Low voter turnout in 2014 led to the election of legislators who don't reflect the values of average Montanans. Instead of working to make Montana a better place, these legislators value confrontation over compromise, ideology over ideas.

You can help! Here's how

Hundreds of MEA-MFT members around the state are contacting their legislators on key bills. It makes a difference! You can help too. It's quick and easy:

- Watch mea-mft.org for updates on the legislature and what you can do to help.
- From mea-mft.org, click on the icon saying "2015 Legislature: Follow the action."
- From there, click on the "Take Action" icon. You'll see requests for you to call or e-mail legislators on key bills. Contacting legislators is EASY! You'll find all the instructions on that page.
- Sign up for Eric Feaver's e-mail updates to get up-to-the-minute bill status and analysis. E-mail efeaver@mea-mft.org

mea-mft.org. Say, "Sign me up for your updates."

- Download the new MEA-MFT mobile app and check the "Take Action" button regularly. You'll find the app at the Apple App Store and Google Play store. Or visit: <http://getmyapp.me//MEA-MFT/>
- Like the MEA-MFT Facebook page: facebook.com/MEAMFT



Celebrity for Early Edge: Missoula mom and businesswoman Elke Govertsen portrays Elsa from "Frozen" to support Early Edge at the state capitol. Elsa also appeared at rallies in Great Falls and Billings. Early Edge is a top priority for MEA-MFT.



Young Montanans for Public Education: MEA-MFT member Melissa Romano's children do homework while their mom testifies against HB 377, a bill that would end Montana's Common Core Standards. MEA-MFT is working with a coalition to protect our public schools from attacks.

MEA-MFT TODAY

MEA-MFT Today published bimonthly September through June by MEA-MFT. Third Class Nonprofit Postage Paid at Billings, MT 59101. Permit No. 88

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Rev up for Rep. Assembly

MEA-MFT members across Montana are registering as delegates to the MEA-MFT Representative Assembly (RA). RA takes place in Helena March 27-28, 2015.

Does your local union have its full slate of delegates? Find out by contacting your local affiliate president. Or contact MEA-MFT (406.442.4250 or 800.398.0826 or e-mail Becky Thomas: bthomas@mea-mft.org).

Delegates at our annual RA have the last word in our union. They debate and establish our resolutions and legislative program. They decide dues and budget.

Delegates elect our officers. At the 2015 RA, they will elect a new NEA director to represent MEA-MFT members on the NEA board of directors. Delegates will also elect a new director-at-large and odd-numbered cluster district chairs and vice chairs.

Celebrities and celebrations:

Several top speakers are slated: Governor Steve Bullock, Superintendent Denise Juneau, NEA President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia, and a surprise guest or two.

In conjunction with Rep. Assembly we will celebrate the MEA-MFT members of the year and this year's Hall of Fame inductees.

So, GET REGISTERED! See you in Helena for Rep. Assembly! 🗨️



Above & below: Scenes from recent MEA-MFT Rep. Assemblies. Join us for the 2015 Rep. Assembly, March 27-28 in Helena.



Who should be the next Montana Teacher of the Year?

Send your nomination to Donna Graveley: dgraveley@mea-mft.org.
Nomination deadline: April 30, 2015.

Check out our new free mobile app!

Available now free for your iPhone or Android device: MEA-MFT's new mobile app. Tons of resources. Find it at the Apple App Store and Google Play store. Or visit: <http://getmyapp.me//MEA-MFT/>



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