



AFTER FOUR DECADES OF FIGHTING FOR MONTANA'S WORKING FAMILIES, PRESIDENT FEAVER ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

"IT RESTS ON OUR SHOULDERS TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND TO DEFEND IT."

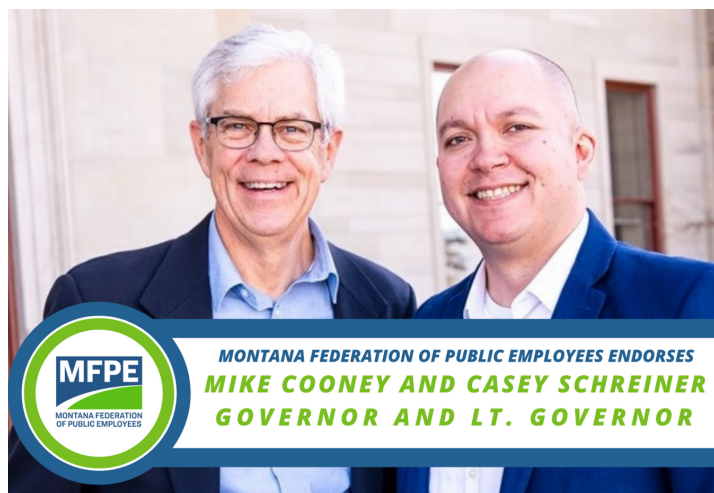
The Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE) held its 3rd Annual Conference on Friday, April 17 and Saturday April 18. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was held virtually over Zoom. Despite those restrictions, the 3rd MFPE Annual Conference drew almost 500 member leaders, a record number of attendees. During the conference MFPE members elected new union leaders, voted on constitutional amendments, and approved the year's budget. However, the biggest news of the conference was the retirement of MFPE President Eric Feaver whose career as a union leader and activist stretched over four decades.

President Feaver became president of the Montana Education Association (MEA) in 1984 and shepherded through MEA's merger with the Montana Federation of Teachers (MFT) in 2000. Feaver was elected President of the newly formed MEA-MFT. Then, in 2018, Feaver

IN THIS ISSUE

FEAVER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT	P.1
COONEY FOR GOVERNOR	P.1
GRAYBILL FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL	P.3
STEVE BULLOCK FOR U.S. SENATE	P.3
MORIGEAU FOR STATE AUDITOR	P.4
MEMBERS MAKE FACE MASKS	P.4
STATE TROOPERS CONTINUE TO KEEP MONTANA SAFE	P.5
MEMBERS PREPARING CITIES AND TOWNS FOR COVID-19	P.5
MEMBERS "PREPARING FOR INCREASED NEED FOR ASSISTANCE"	P.6
SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF COVID-19	P.6
PUTTING TECH TO THE TEST	P.7
MEMBERS HELP MONTANA WEATHER THE STORM	P.7
NEW BENEFIT: TRAUMA COUNSELING	P.8

MFPE ENDORSEMENTS: MIKE COONEY AND CASEY SCHREINER FOR GOVERNOR AND LT. GOVERNOR



The Montana Federation of Public Employees' (MFPE) has endorsed Lt. Governor Mike Cooney and Minority Leader Casey Schreiner for Governor and Lt. Governor.

"We know Mike," said President Eric Feaver. "We have worked with him throughout his long, distinguished career in public service, from the legislature, to Secretary of State, to the Montana Historical Society, to the Montana Labor Department, and now as Lieutenant Governor. Mike knows Montana. Mike knows good government."

PRESIDENT FEAVER ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT | CONT. FROM P.1

oversaw the merger of MEA-MFT with the Montana Public Employees Association (MPEA) to form the Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE), Montana's largest and most professionally diverse union with 23,000 members. Perhaps no union leader has had more of an impact on Montana's labor movement.



During closing remarks to MFPE members on Friday evening, President Feaver said:

We are unique, we are diverse. In the Montana context, we are huge and we have a huge responsibility to see that the labor movement in this state goes forward. If we fail or if we are killed by the political processes by the things that have occurred in states like Iowa and Wisconsin and Michigan, the labor movement will die in Montana. It rests on our shoulders to bear the burden of the labor movement and to defend it.

During Friday's plenary session, MFPE members elected their statewide leadership. MFPE 2nd Vice President Amanda Curtis was elected to succeed Feaver as MFPE's next President. 1st Vice President Bill Dwyer was re-elected, current MFPE Treasurer Rich Aarstad was elected 2nd Vice President, and Michelle Wheat was elected MFPE Treasurer.

Amanda Curtis, a Butte educator, former state legislator, and nominee for U.S. Senate said the

following while addressing MFPE delegates prior to her successful election:

This union has a 138-year history and we're going to continue for another 138 years and centuries after that regardless of who's in governance. We're going to keep protecting pensions, bargaining better pay, benefits, and working conditions, and getting our members elected to office.

MFPE's new statewide officers will take office June 15, 2020. ♦

MIKE COONEY AND CASEY SCHREINER FOR GOVERNOR AND LT. GOVERNOR | CONT. FROM P. 1

"A long time ago, we encouraged Mike to run for governor because we know he will serve all Montanans – Republicans and Independents, as well as Democrats. We are further delighted Mike chose another experienced political leader with impressive legislative credentials, former public school teacher Casey Schreiner, to be his running mate." ♦

MFPE ANNOUNCES STATEWIDE ENDORSEMENTS ELECTION IS JUNE 2ND

Like everything MFPE does, our candidate endorsement process is member driven and locally-grounded. For statewide candidates, MFPE's democratically elected PAC Board conducts interviews and endorses candidates based on their voting record, public statements, and viability. For legislative candidates, regional interview teams conduct hundreds of interviews in March of the election year and make recommendations to the PAC Board for final endorsement. If you or someone you know would like to join a regional interview team, please contact MFPE Political Director, Lauren Caldwell, at lcaldwell@mfpe.org.

RAPH GRAYBILL FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL



The Montana Federation of Public Employees' (MFPE) has endorsed Raph Graybill for Attorney General.

"We first met Raph Graybill when we visited with him about the constitutional issues the privatization of public education provokes," said MFPE President Eric Feaver. "From that point forward, Graybill has impressed us with his commitment to the plain meaning of Montana's brilliant 1972 constitution. He is determined to defend our constitution against all those who would twist it to their special, self-serving, unconstitutional interests."

Graybill believes, as we believe, that public institutions exist for the common good and should be carefully nurtured, not cavalierly tossed aside. The minute he steps into office, Raph Graybill will be Montana's lawyer for all the people, and a brilliant one to boot." ♦



**THE PRIMARY ELECTION IS
JUNE 2ND!**

GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK FOR U.S. SENATE

Following an in-depth interview conducted by MFPE member leaders, MFPE has endorsed Governor Steve Bullock for U.S. Senate.



In announcing the endorsement, MFPE President Feaver stated:

"Governor Steve Bullock gets it. He gets that all Montanans want and deserve good government programs and services that help them in their everyday individual, family, and community lives. As governor, he twice delivered Medicaid Expansion that right now is a life saver for thousands of Montanans. He delivered unprecedented increases in public school funding and expansion of public school programs. He successfully guided the state government through a fiscal crisis, a state government of terrific employees who are now hard at work providing our citizens the best they can as we all struggle through the coronavirus provoked crisis. Governor Bullock is more than willing to meet with we the people to visit about the issues of the day and engage in hard questions of the moment."

Governor Bullock is a proven Montana political leader who will infinitely better represent us all in the U.S. Senate than his incumbent opponent who remains unapproachable, unwilling to visit with this union, and incapable of convening a forum of any sort that he does not control." ♦

SHANE MORIGEAU FOR STATE AUDITOR

MFPE has endorsed state legislator Shane Morigeau to become Montana's next State Auditor because of where he stands on important issues facing MFPE's diverse membership.



"Shane Morigeau believes, as we believe, the Montana insurance industry must never operate beyond the law and common sense," said President Eric Feaver. "As our State Auditor and Commissioner of Securities and Insurance, Shane Morigeau will actually work to serve Montana as our primary insurance consumer advocate. No trick. No fake. Shane Morigeau is one of us." ♦

MFPE PRIMARY ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS



The 2020 primary election is June 2nd

You can view all
of MFPE's
primary election
endorsements here:



[MFPE.org/2020-primary-election-endorsements](https://mfpe.org/2020-primary-election-endorsements)

MFPE MEMBERS PRODUCING REUSABLE FACE MASKS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

As COVID-19 spreads across the country and our state, Montanans are stepping up to battle the virus, including MFPE member Duff Gray. "Tinkerers" in Billings have designed reusable face masks for the battle against coronavirus and Gray, a career and technical education (CTE) educator at West High is overseeing the production of the masks for, which will be used by local area healthcare workers.



He's doing this in addition to teaching full-time. According to Billings Education Association President Rachel Schillreff, the majority of 3-D printers in the district are currently being used for the production of the reusable face masks and the machines are being manned by MFPE members.

Duff Gray also serves as a building rep for his union and sits on the negotiations team. ♦

MFPE MEMBER STATE TROOPERS CONTINUE TO KEEP MONTANA SAFE



The work of Montana's law enforcement can't stop in the face of a pandemic. However, COVID-19 is causing some necessary changes. Montana Highway Patrol Trooper and MFPE member Carl Ward said that "there is definitely a greater sense of self awareness when dealing with the public in regards to PPE and increased sanitation. Nonetheless, this pandemic does not let any first responder cease to answer the call to service on a daily basis. We remain focused on being visible and vigilant."

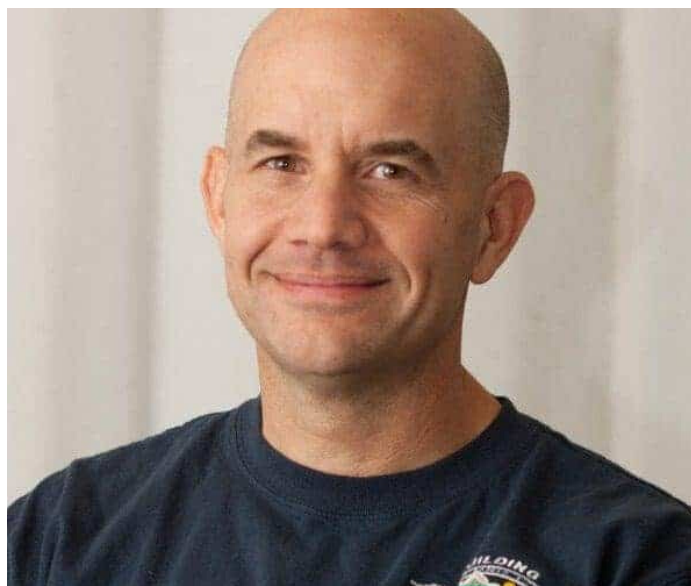
No matter the circumstances, Montana's troopers are on the front lines protecting Montanans and their families. "We will continue to patrol, respond to service calls, and help the motoring public," said Ward. "I would ask that people be patient during this stressful time and be especially mindful when traveling around Montana."

As a state trooper, Ward knows that every day brings danger and the chance of being put in harm's way. However, Ward said the pandemic adds another level of concern to an already dangerous job: how his service could impact his family. "In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, I find myself thinking a lot about the fact that my job as a first responder can directly affect my family, he said. "I find reassurance in knowing my immediate family as well as the first responder community go out everyday and continue to serve,

even with the knowledge of what could be. I am still very grateful to live and serve the people of Montana. I am always amazed at the amount of support all first responders receive from the citizens of Montana."

Montana is a better place because of MFPE members like Carl Ward and his family who continue to do work that matters, regardless of the situation. ♦

MFPE MEMBERS PREPARING CITIES AND TOWNS FOR COVID-19



Life has been especially busy since COVID-19 hit Montana. "I worked with the Missoula Incident Command Team in setting up two COVID-19 shelters in the Missoula area," says Sauro. Sauro also wrote the City of Missoula Emergency Construction COVID-19 Protocol for City of Missoula inspectors to follow.

While setting up Missoula's COVID-19 shelters, it was Sauro's job to "make sure the boilers got inspected and approved by the State of Montana and the potable water system in the building was safe. I had to make sure the proper backflow devices for the building were in place and if not had them installed and inspected." Sauro recently did a final walk through to make sure the building's potable water and drainage systems were ready for use.

As Montana continues to respond to the spread of COVID-19, MFPE members like Tony Sauro are doing absolutely critical work to prepare cities and towns like Missoula. ♦

MFPE MEMBERS “PREPARING FOR INCREASED NEED FOR ASSISTANCE”

With the impacts of COVID-19 still disrupting Montana's economy and families, MFPE member Sam Harrington is preparing for increased needs for assistance. Sam, a Client Service Coordinator with the Office of Public Assistance, said that she anticipates that “as layoffs and closures



become more prevalent in our communities, we will also see an increase in individuals and families seeking not only food and medical assistance through SNAP and Medicaid, but that we may also see an uptick in emergency assistance requests.” This work is essential for getting Montana families the help they need and the tools to recover, both in terms of health and financial well-being. ♦

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

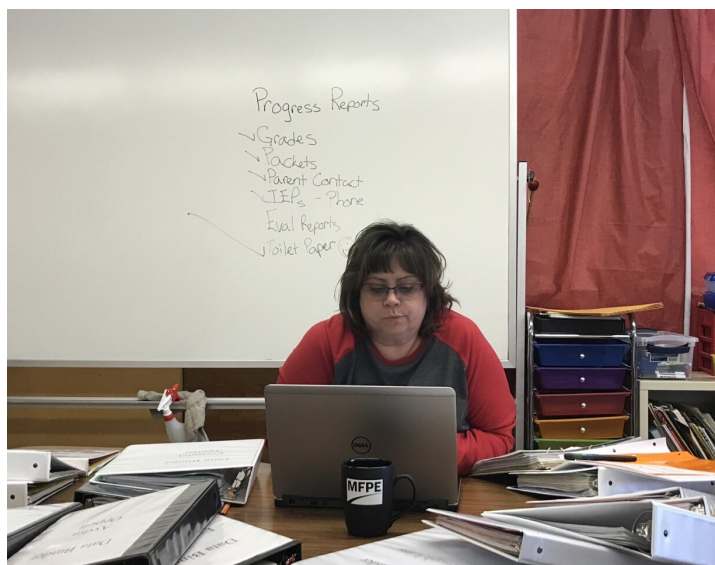
Public schools have been closed for seven weeks now in response to the coronavirus appearing in Montana. MFPE member Cherie Stordal is a special education teacher in Great Falls and said that “it seems as though everything has changed in the face of COVID-19.” However, like many other MFPE members, that hasn’t stopped Cherie from serving her students.

“Our students are not in school, but that does not stop the need for learning and moving forward with educational goals,” Cherie said. “I am a special education teacher, so that means each of my students need individualized learning packets.”

What is Cherie doing to meet the needs of Great Falls students? “I developed a packet for each of the students that I serve, in hopes they will be able to maintain skills during this untimely closure. The data

collected each day was imperative to drive the focus of the learning packets. My packets included lessons, tools, books, and educational games. Some of the tools I included in the packets were pencils, number lines, flashcards, multiplication charts, 100 charts, glue sticks, crayons, color pencils, dice, game pieces, and perhaps a coloring book. I do not expect to have the tools returned, but they were needed to make sure students have what they need to be successful during this school closure.”

Cherie’s work doesn’t stop with her students. Instead, like so many other MFPE members, her work extends to parents and the entire community. Cherie told us that she and her colleagues have all contacted each of their students’ families to check in and offer assistance.



“We have contacted each of our families, to see if there are ways we can support them through this time,” Cherie told us. “As a district, we have worked very hard to make sure families in need have supplies from our food pantries and everyone under the age of 18 is welcome to pick up a free lunch and breakfast each day from our food trucks.”

While school closures mean even more work for Montana’s education professionals, Cherie says she is “very proud of my colleagues for taking the time to create meaningful work packets and learning opportunities that address the needs of all students. This will definitely be difficult to ‘bounce’ back from, but the professionalism shown throughout my district is second to none!” ♦

PUTTING TECH TO THE TEST DURING COVID-19

Rick Wilkowski is a Network Systems Engineer with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. As more and more employees are forced to work remotely or from home, MFPE members like Wilkowski are stepping up to the plate. “We have switched from a face to face support to more of a remote control support over the years,” says Wilkoski. “Now with the current pandemic, this practice is being put to the test. Communicating with equipment not directly connected to the State network has it’s challenges.”



Despite the challenges, Wilkowski is finding a way for staff to continue their work on behalf of the people of Montana. Because of Network Systems Engineers, many state employees are able to continue to keep working using state supplied laptops to connect to their work via VPN (Virtual Private

Network), VDI (Virtual Desktop Interface), or CITRIX.

“When the boss called for all hands on deck, we all helped where we could,” says Wilkowski. “In the last week the entire staff has been prepping laptops for distribution that we started handing out on March 23rd. We have several hundred refurbished laptops that have been set up for use in a work from home environment.” ♦

MFPE MEMBERS HELP MONTANA WEATHER THE STORM: ‘OUR PHONES ARE RINGING OFF THE HOOK’

As too many Montanans know, the COVID-19 outbreak is not only impacting the health of our communities, it’s impacting state and national economies. “We went from having a very low unemployment rate statewide to facing an absolute crisis,” says MFPE member Brent Beardslee, an unemployment insurance claims adjudicator with the State of Montana. “Our phone

lines have been ringing off the hook.”

Members like Beardslee do critical work to help Montana families and communities make it through crises like the one we are currently facing.

“Everyone in the agency has been working in crisis mode to get as much work done as possible,” Beardslee tells us. “The programmers with our IT department have been amazing with everything they do and we have opened up overtime options for employees just to have as much time in the day as possible.”

Beardslee’s work doesn’t stop at the office either. “I have been putting myself out there as much as possible to encourage everyone I know to file a claim if their hours have been reduced, or if they have been laid off. So many family and friends have approached me with questions about filing for unemployment insurance. I try to do my best to answer their questions in a professional manner, but the need for help is incredible right now as we face economic collapse.”

While dealing with an increased workload, Beardslee is also looking to the future. “I hope that the future we build from this won’t be another house of match sticks over an open flame. People need access to affordable healthcare.

Workers need basic protections like sick leave. We shouldn’t let people continue to work for poverty wages. I hope that we as a society realize that we can build a better future that values all workers. We all get up and go to work for ourselves, our families, and our communities.” ♦



MFPE OFFERING FREE NEW BENEFIT TO MEMBERS: TRAUMA COUNSELING

Today, all of us could agree that we work in scary and uncertain times. But even before the coronavirus pandemic struck, MFPE understood the stress and strain that comes with the work our members do to heal, help, and serve their communities.

But what happens when our members' own daily stress is compounded by trauma-inducing events in their own lives? We all know how difficult it is to be fully present for others when we are carrying the burden of our own traumas.

In response, MFPE and AFT are offering a free new benefit for members—trauma counseling. (And, yes, in certain circumstances, a member with a coronavirus infection is eligible for this coverage.) The traumas covered by this new insurance include:

- An injury due to aggravated assault, sexual assault,

a mass shooting or a terrorist act; this includes victims of domestic violence.

- Witnessing a violent incident at work.
- Bullying, harassment, or the threat or experience of secondary trauma resulting in a mild, moderate or severe mental health condition and an impairment of function.
- Contracting an infectious disease at work—including the coronavirus.
- An injury or infection from a disease during a major disaster, as declared by the National Emergencies Act.

Starting April 1, MFPE and AFT started providing this trauma coverage benefit to all active working members, including those on leave status.

Learn more at mfpe.org/trauma-counseling ◆