

Protect Our Jobs

During the week on March 5, 2012, a statewide campaign to protect our jobs and our voice at work will be launched — and our most important task for the coming year will begin.

A coalition representing Michigan workers, small business owners, clergy, unions and other organizations from across the state will announce the Protect Our Jobs campaign, which aims to amend the state constitution to protect the right to collectively bargain. Over the past year, Lansing politicians have moved one anti-worker measure after another, doing nothing to help put Michigan back to work.

In fact, there are more than 100 bills currently pending in the Legislature that weaken protections for APA/MEA members, and many other workers from nurses and firefighters to construction and factory employees.

To rebuild our economy, we all need to work together to protect Michigan workers and strengthen the middle class to help small businesses create jobs.

Our state organization, the MEA, is proud to help lead this charge. But it won't be easy. We need to collect more than 322,000 valid signatures in less than four months to put this important measure on the November ballot.

MEA has been working on a plan that involves all field offices, staff, leaders and members — working together, we can and will protect our work, our voice and our future.

Visit www.ProtectOurJobs.com to volunteer with the campaign and help protect the middle class.

Legislative Update

Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chair

Last night I watched the movie “Mississippi Burning”. It is a disturbing depiction of what was going on during the early days of the civil rights movement (1964) particularly in this southern state. The church and home burnings, lynchings, intimidation tactics, active support by the local authorities, politicians, and businessmen for the KKK. All very striking.

But what really caught my ear was a line from a particularly murderous white man in the local “social club” (the county being dry). He said to FBI Agent Anderson, (paraphrasing from memory), “There are five thousand n***** in Jessup County that ain’t registered to vote and we are going to by God keep it that way!!”.

So there it was in all its starkness. Beyond the legacy of southern racism and the long history of the abuse of a peoples, this was all about voter suppression. That was striking, but what brought me to shame was to realize that similar voter suppression of minority and poor has continued to this very day.

Ever since the Republican party adopted their “Southern Strategy” to elect Nixon, that party has engaged in continual efforts to leverage racism and prejudices for electoral advantage. And they’ve taken it further all the time, with feigned “voter fraud concerns” being addressed by pictured identification requirements and the like.

This shameful effort has now come fully to Michigan. Just in the last few days, the Senate’s super-majority of Republicans passed new requirements of citizens who want to register to vote, or apply for an absentee ballot. These are requirements that are well-known by fair election organizations that are designed to reduce participation of minority and poor voters. And perhaps even worse, the bills also would require volunteers to complete training before working on voter registration drives and require voter applicants to affirm they are U.S. citizens.

Let me be clear about this – as similar efforts have been proposed and passed across the country, there have NEVER been any actual, credible reports of the types of supposed election fraud occurring that are the public justification for such bills. These are designed almost entirely to reduce the level of participation by constituencies what often, when engaged through registration drives and get out the vote efforts, will usually vote for Democrats. It’s as crass and calculated as that.

And it’s shameful.

This is merely the latest immorality committed by this legislature and Governor. It has only been a very few weeks since Governor Snyder signed the extremist HB 4770 that bans domestic partner benefits for state employees. Frankly, since Snyder was elected as a center-right moderate, I'd been giving him the "benefit of the doubt" hoping that when and if some extreme measure like HB 4770 came to him, he would have the political courage to do the right thing and veto it. But that didn't happen. With that stroke of his pen, as far as I am concerned, he stepped resolutely toward the right wing of his party.

Signing that bill was absolutely shameful.

I do not believe for one moment that the people of Michigan elected this current legislature with ANY expectation that the lawmakers would place so much focus on social/moral issues. The attacks on public employees, on the poor, on minorities, on reproductive rights, and on and on. Was the average voter in 2010 expecting this? I don't think so.

One can only hope for some corrective results in the Fall of 2012.

Annoying or Contract Violation? Know Your Contract!

Everyone wants the best working environment possible. For each employee that perfect environment may be different based on personality and skill set. When you encounter a conflict at work you may need to make an assessment whether the problem is a contractual violation or merely a nuisance.

The first step in deciding if it is a contractual violation is to assess if the situation is a working condition covered by the MSU-APA Contract or state/federal laws such as use of paid leave (sick, personal, vacation), Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), overtime, working hours or wages.

There are typically four major types of grievances:

- Plain Violation of the Contract which is a direct violation of the clear contract language.
- Disagreement over Interpretation of the Contract
- Fact Disputes – does management believe a different set of facts than the employee
- Equity Disputes – has the contract or the work issue been applied equally to all employees

If the answer is “yes it is a working condition”, then refer to your contract at www.msuapa.org and contact the MSU APA office if the issue cannot be resolved. If the answer is “no the situation is not a working condition”, then you need to assess if it is a situation than can be solved with in your area or department. If it cannot be solved directly by you, call the MSU APA office for advice for how to deal with your specific situation.

Is it a grievance? Here are some common situations that depending on the facts, may or may not be a grievance:

1) My supervisor doesn't like me and does not communicate with me.

This is not a grievance, but it is a problem that needs to be resolved before the lack of communication creates a disconnect between management expectations and the employee's work performance. You can call the APA office for advice on how to handle the situation.

2) My colleague doesn't do his/her job and their duties are then assigned to me by my supervisor.

This may or may not be grievance depending on the facts.

You are not responsible to be a manager of a fellow employee and therefore, if they are not doing their job, although it may affect you, it is not your responsibility to do something about it.

It could be a grievance if you are doing the duties of another job that is a higher classification (Article 15 Classification/Reclassification), if you should be compensated for the extra work, or if you are a Level 8, 9, 10 or 11 and are being asked to work more than 40 hours (Article 18 Special Provisions). www.msuapa.org

3) I was hired in with a job title that has since been significantly changed to no longer include the original duties.

It could be a grievance that would need to be addressed with a reclassification and commensurate compensation. It could also be a violation depending on which position you have been evaluated.

4) My vacation request was denied.

This may or may not be grievance. What are the circumstances around the request? How much notice was given? Did the supervisor respond in a timely manner? Is this the first time vacation has been denied (Article 21 Vacation Pay). Is the denial of vacation being used as discipline (Article 10 Settlement of Disputes)?

5) I've always worked remotely and got a new supervisor that is requiring me to come to campus to work.

It is a management right to set the time and location of your work. Some extenuating factors may be the reasonableness of the request, was appropriate notice given if it is a change in current practice and is the change being used as discipline (Article 10 Settlement of Disputes).

6) I am a Level 11 and was ordered to work beyond 40 hours and was told I would be given compensatory time off at straight time.

This is a grievance. A Level 8, 9, 10 or 11 has a right to overtime if they are required to work in excess of 40 hours in a work week. It is up to the employee if they want to use the time at time and half as compensatory time. It is not a decision up to the Employer (Article 18 Special Provisions).

7) I was asked to provide a physician's note for every sick leave day even though I have FMLA paperwork on file for that type of illness.

This may or may not be grievance based on the facts. The contract provides that the Employer may ask for a physician's note for sick leave Article 24 Sick Leave, Clause 188. However, there needs to be cause substantiated prior to the Employer request. For regular use of sick leave for a qualifying medical condition under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Employer may require medical certification. Once the medical certification is provided an employee should not have to provide additional physician's statement for each FMLA qualifying illness sick leave day.

8) My supervisor is harassing me.

The definition of harassment in employment is very specific and directly related to protected classes (race, gender, religion, national origin, age and disability).

If the harassment is based on gender (sex) than it may be a violation of state and federal laws and the MSU Sexual Harassment Policy

(<http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/sexharass.htm>).

An employee does not have to be subjected to a hostile work environment. Keep in mind, a supervisor with poor management skills may not rise to the level of harassment.

Contact the APA office with any workplace concerns of this nature (517) 353-4898.

Your Fellow APs

Interview with APA member Lisa Laughman (Davidson)

Employee Assistance Program Counselor | Emotional Wellness Consultant Health4U

How long have you been at MSU?

I came to campus in 1990 to pursue my Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work. In 1991 I took my first MSU job in the Department of Student Life. I was the Coordinator of a grant funded alcohol education program called Project Impact. That grant ended in 1993, and I left campus and became a substance abuse counselor and then later an employee assistance counselor in the local community. In 2003 the opportunity presented itself for me to return to MSU as the Coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program.

Have you been a member of APA the whole time?

No. I have been a member of both the APA and APSA unions.

Can you tell me a little bit about what you do?

I currently serve two roles on campus. First and foremost I am one of two [MSU Employee Assistance Program](#) counselors. We provide confidential, short term, solution focused counseling to faculty, staff, graduate student employees and their spouse/partners and other benefits eligible family members. This counseling is provided at no direct cost to the employee.

I also serve as an emotional wellness consultant for the [Health4U program](#). In this role I provide stress reduction trainings, healthy relationship and emotional wellness classes. I also get to go out to departments and provide emotional health and stress reduction training on site as part of staff development retreats. These [departmental services programs](#) give us an opportunity to improve individual health and help create healthier work team climates at the same time.

I also facilitate the Breaking Free From Stress Class which is offered in partnership with [Human Resource Development](#). This class has been offered at least once a semester since January 2004. Our vital partnership with HRD has led to hundreds of MSU employees having access to comprehensive stress reduction education.

What do you love about working at MSU?

I have the honor of standing with people when they are having their "red hot moment" and help them know they are not alone. This work is incredibly meaningful and I'm honored that people trust me with their emotions and their stories. That I can create a safe place for people to come and say whatever it is they need to say about whatever it is they are experiencing. That's extremely heart-felt work.

Many people don't realize their own worthiness, strength, resiliency, and capacity to move through hard things with wisdom and grace. So I get to remind people of that. People transform and move through all different kinds of things when at first, they think that circumstance is going to beat them, that they'll never be able to feel better or make a necessary change. I get to watch them surprise themselves and transcend their circumstances. It is exciting to see that happen so often, it gives me confidence that all people have great capacity for mental health and well-being.

I also love being a stress reduction coach, teaching people how to have a different relationship with their current life circumstances as well as their own emotions. I find great meaning and purpose in helping folks have less stress and more joy in their day to day life. Helping someone increase their psychological flexibility, helping them be more personally and professionally effective, while at the same time helping them protect and enhance their physical and emotional health, now that's a reason to get out of bed in the morning and come to work.

What are the challenges of your position on campus?

I think the main challenge is that so many people are still not aware that we exist, or aware of the full range of counseling and health promotion services that are available to them as part of their employment benefit. I hope everyone who reads this will take the opportunity to visit our websites, learn about our programs, and sign up for our on line health promotion services

What do you like to do when you are not at work?

Well, I have three incredibly amazing kids. When I'm not at my MSU job, my life is largely consumed with all it takes to single parent three teenagers and take care of our dog. I also love spending quality time with my girlfriend, being outdoors in beautiful places like Saugatuck, and teaching my Wisdom Heart classes through my private business Lakeside Consulting, Inc.

I'm a really lucky person, I have found my calling (counseling and teaching about emotional wellness), and so often times my work feels like my hobby. I feel inspired by the people I serve and the learning we do together.

Don't Let Stress Get the Best of U!

Do you feel stressed out? Are you going through a personal or job-related circumstance that is weighing you down? Did you know that as an MSU employee there are many resources available to help you?

"We live in a culture that encourages us to be really stressed out and anxious, frustrated and competitive. It really is learning to live against the cultural norm and to see that it's not necessary." – Lisa Laughman Davidson

I met with APA member [Lisa Laughman Davidson](#) to find out more about what the University has to offer its employees. Lisa, along with Jonathon Novello, is one of two full-time MSW counselors on staff at the [MSU Employee Assistance Program](#). I first became aware of Lisa through Human Resources Development's Breaking Free From Stress class, which I found to be hugely helpful in my own personal journey. I was surprised to find out just how many resources are available to MSU employees.

"I think that one of the best preventative health measures people can do is to be intentionally strengthening their own relaxation response, to be involved in the emotional wellness classes we have through [Health4U](#) and the EAP – to be having conversations on how to increase their ability to relax more moment to moment. I think if people do that and walk that path, they will see a positive outcome in their health." - LLD

MSUeap counselors can see people for a wide variety of personal or work concerns, with no cost to the employee. The Mission of MSUeap is to support and enhance the emotional health of the campus community. Counselors will see the employee or family member for 1-6 sessions per event. If longer-term counseling is needed, they can offer a referral to someone in the community, making the getting connected process a lot easier than just looking through the phone book or searching the internet. MSUeap does not operate as an ongoing counseling center, as they want to be as open as possible to the people coming in who need access to someone sooner rather than later. MSUeap counselors can see people for anything they see fit – work-related or personal, with no cost to the employee.

"The link between stress and heart disease, stress and diabetes is being explored. Behind any major health problem, it's back there. Why would you not take advantage of the University resources that are so plentiful here? It's not really talked about, but there are some great resources if you want to strengthen your capacity to experience less stress and your ability to relax and navigate your current stressors." – LLD

Breaking Free From Stress and Navigating Life Effectively are two courses that Lisa teaches with Milly Gillin through [Human Resources Development](#). Both courses give attendees an opportunity to take time out and learn how to best navigate their circumstances. People often feel that others are making them crazy, job or home circumstances. These classes seek to share the understanding that each of us creates our own personal experience moment to moment and that our reactions are more about our thinking than the circumstances. This understanding allows people to see when they are caught up in a stress reaction and can help them open up to new thinking that might help them best respond to the person or event that is challenging them.

Lisa spoke to me about a fellow APA member who spent significant time in Breaking Free From Stress and other learning opportunities. After a visit to a chiropractor, she was told not to come back, since she was no longer out of alignment. She was no longer spending so much time constricted and tense. The more she relaxed, the less her body assumed the stress position and that led to a very tangible outcome.

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Please see the selection of upcoming offerings from Health4U, HRD and resources that you can look into. Information on the [MSU Employee Assistance Program](#) can be found here:

eap.msu.edu | 517-355-4506 | 1-888-280-9478 | eap@hc.msu.edu

Upcoming Health 4U Classes:

<http://health4u.msu.edu> | 517-353-2596 | health4u@msu.edu

Offered at no cost to the employee, but registration is required.

Power of Belief – Tuesdays over the lunch hour beginning March 27

This four session series, which is based on Ray Dodd's book *The Power of Belief*, is designed to help you realize the hidden impact your belief system has on your day to day life experience.

Explore the Following:

- How beliefs create internal barriers to success and happiness
- What's behind self defeating behavior
- Becoming aware of your beliefs
- Letting go of old, outdated, unhelpful beliefs
- Practical ways to create new beliefs

The Healing Power of Guided Imagery – Wednesdays over the lunch hour beginning March 21

Guided imagery is a form of directed day-dreaming that relaxes the mind and engages the senses in the physical and emotional healing process. It has been shown to alleviate pain, reduce depression and boost the immune system.

Trance of Scarcity – Wednesdays over the lunch hour beginning May 30

If a person has the ability to notice and attend to their state of being/mind they are more able to take action when they are centered and at their best and less likely to take action when they are in a low mood, reactive, problem oriented etc. A person's ability to be more able to operate from a high quality state of mind allows them to be optimally effective as an employee, spouse/partner, parent, family member, team member, community member, etc. It will also help them be a more wise and effective leader of their personal and professional lives. Living from this perspective reduces stress and therefore likely impacts chances of developing stress related illnesses.

Upcoming Human Resources Development Class:

<http://spartanslearn.msu.edu> | 517-355-0183 | hrd@hr.msu.edu

\$290 investment - you may use your Educational Assistance Benefit

Breaking Free from Stress – Tuesdays May 1, 8, 15 and 22 1-4:30pm

External circumstances such as potential job loss, anger in the workplace, too much to do in too little time, financial concerns, relationship changes, loss of a loved one and other events can have a significant impact on our lives. In this course, created by Lakeside Consulting, Inc., you will learn the basic principles that will help you see how to be less reactive to people and events and how to live your life from a deeper perspective of common sense and wisdom.

Self-Learning Opportunities:

<http://eap.msu.edu/mission/10factors.html>

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html

<http://eap.msu.edu/resources/mh.html>

Lisa's Book Recommendations

[The Happiness Trap – Dr. Russ Harris](#)

[The Confidence Gap – Dr. Russ Harris](#)

[The Gifts of Imperfection – Brene Brown](#)

[The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety – John P. Forsyth](#)

[The Trance of Scarcity – Victoria Castle](#)

[Slowing Down to the Speed of Life – Richard Carlson](#)

[You Can Be Happy No Matter What – Richard Carlson](#)

Where Do I Turn for APA Answers?

What does my contract guarantee? How do MSU procedures affect me? Can my supervisor do that? These and countless other questions are asked every day by APA members about the wages, benefits, terms and working conditions of their MSU employment. The instinct of most people is to ask a colleague we hope is knowledgeable and trustworthy. However, if you cannot get the answer you need, do you assume your supervisor will provide an unbiased answer, attempt to find and interpret all the relevant policies and procedures, or do you give up and make the best of things?

APA is here to help fill any knowledge gap in a way designed to help YOU first. The APA Membership Committee has been working hard to create more resources to meet the every day information needs of our fellow members. A primary focus has been expanding the Area Representative program. The Committee analyzed the membership data and divided MSU into five (5) large areas ([map](#)). The APA has several appointed Area Representatives, but more ARs are currently undergoing an extensive education series to add to the cadre. A training series is also planned for Fall 2012.

Q: What does an Area Representative do?

A: Area representatives are members meant to be local, first points of contact with other APA members. ARs typically welcome new members to the Area, assist in organizing APA events, answer basic member questions, connect members with the right resources at APA and MSU, and provide information updates about the APA/MEA/NEA.

Q: How do I contact an Area Representative?

A: The APA website has a page devoted to the AR program ([Area Representatives](#)). Please feel free to contact any area representative listed, regardless of Area, but try your local one if you're not sure! New ARs will be continually added to the site as they finish the training. Any of them will be glad to hear from you.

Q: Does my boss have to know I contacted an Area Representative?

A: No! You are well within your rights to ask questions of a union official, even if no grievance results. ARs will always be discrete and will not discuss your circumstances with anyone else, other than to ask further questions to the APA Officers and Staff. ARs understand the importance of your privacy.

Q: If my boss informs me to contact my union representative, whom do I contact?

A: Please call the APA Office right away 517-353-4898. ARs may aid the APA Officers and Staff, but will rarely replace them.

Q: How do I learn more about or volunteer to become an Area Representative?

A: Please contact the APA Membership Committee Chairperson, Nick Bourland at bourlan2@msu.edu for more information about the AR Program.

Taking Time to Talk to Every APA Member!

Announcing the APA All Member Canvas

Throughout the remainder of 2012 and into 2013 you will notice a group of APA volunteers fanning out throughout the campus to seek feedback from the more than 2,100 members of the APA. The purpose of this face-to-face survey is to get real time feedback and listen to the membership regarding future planning. If you have questions or are interested in volunteering as a surveyor, please contact Nick Bourland at bourlan2@msu.edu.

Walk for Michigan – April 24 – Hawk Island Park

What is Walk for Michigan?

Walk for Michigan is a state-wide fundraiser for local communities to raise money for local schools. It is a year-long engagement of Michigan students to encourage a healthy lifestyle and culminates in 5K walks throughout Michigan on April 21, 2012. It includes a large, engaged network of schools, community groups, and non-profit organizations

Why Walk for Michigan?

Two good reasons: school funding and resources are diminishing, and Michigan has the 10th highest obesity rate in the U.S.

“Results show statistically significant relationships between fitness and academic achievement”

- American School Health Association

Locally-based efforts throughout the state can support the health of local schools and students.

How It Works

Different sites throughout the state are lead by local hosts, determined through an application process. Schools, communities, and families raise funds throughout the school year, which culminates in a 5K walk on April 21, 2012. These same groups also participate in healthy living events aligned with the fundraising activities.

The Hosts

Interested parties can apply to host a Walk for their region. Limited to non-profits, faith based organizations, and schools. Hosts are responsible for executing the 5K Walk, any additional events, and engaging with their region. Hosts must provide their own materials for engagement. PCF will provide the templates, useful tips, and networks.

Hosts should be fully engaged with schools in the region to assist in healthy living events and fundraising activities.

\$28 5K Walk registration fees are split by hosts and PCF. 1000 registered walkers equals \$21,000 in revenue.

Why Should You Get Involved?

As an annual fundraiser, this can provide sustainable resources for Michigan’s schools.

Because of its state-wide focus and multi-network involvement, this is a fantastic community outreach and marketing opportunity. A tangible opportunity to impact the financial health of school districts and the physical health of our state’s children.

For more information, please visit the Walk For Michigan website. Volunteers are needed!

<http://www.walkformichigan.org>

Calendar

APA Executive Board

March 20 at 2:00 pm - APA Office

April 10 at 2:00 pm - APA Office

New Member Orientation

March 15 12:00 -1:00 pm

Spartan Room B, International Center

Lunch and Learn: Standing with Michigan Workers - Protect Our Jobs

April 5 12:00 -1:00 pm

Spartan Room A&B, International Center

APA Election

Voting Open: March 23-29, 2012

Further election information and links to the online ballot will be provided via the APA ListServ

APA Member Facebook Group: Come and join the dialogue!

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/msuapa/>