

Protect Our Jobs Campaign

Michigan citizens from all backgrounds who work hard and play by the rules are joining together and taking a stand.

For more than a year, Lansing politicians and corporate special interests have made one attack after another on Michigan workers: cutting middle-class families' wages, health care benefits, retirement security and safety protections.

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.

These political attacks on basic collective bargaining rights have done nothing to put Michiganders back to work. Instead, all they've done is hurt middle-class families, small businesses and local communities.

In March, a coalition of 23 Michigan labor unions, small businesses and community-based groups launched the Protect Our Jobs campaign. Citizens across Michigan have been collecting signatures to put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot that will enshrine into our state Constitution the basic right of every worker to collectively bargain. Collective bargaining gives all workers a voice and the ability to come together to negotiate a fair contract. Without these protections, we have no true voice in our wages, hours of work, and conditions of employment.

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 critical issue on the November ballot.

To learn more about the campaign, please visit ProtectOurJobs.com. If you would like to sign the petition to place the issue on the November ballot, contact the APA/MEA office at 517.353.4898.

Please sign up to get involved in the campaign — after all, this is about protecting your job, your wages, your benefits, your safety and your voice.

Legislative Update - The Belly of the Beast

by Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chairperson

Have you ever heard the expression, “[starve the beast](#)”? Since the Reagan years, this has been the name of the strategy - even crusade - engaged in by conservatives to “reduce the size of government” and such. It has been a heinous and deliberate strategy to eliminate revenue and cause so much financial pressure on the Federal, State, and local governments that all would have to eliminate virtually anything that would be considered a “social good”.

Well, fellow AP, you and I are part of the “beast” that conservatives have been starving. This is true from multiple perspective - Higher Ed/Public Ed, funding is abysmal. Student tuition costs have gone out of sight. Assaults on public employee pay, benefits, and pensions. Again, that’s you and me. With the latter, conservatives have tended to portray us grossly overpaid with huge and wonderful benefits that the “average person” will never see. Of course, what they’re really trying to do is use public employees as scapegoats. The old strategy of playing one group of downtrodden against another - eventually they’ll kill one another (literally or figuratively).

There’s much to be said about all of this, and rather than go on and on myself I’d prefer to share a [link to an article that covers much of this](#) in a superior manner than I could provide.

Please read it over. Pay particular attention to the information deep in the article about higher education and public employees.

We have to get the Protect our Jobs amendment passed this fall and we must elect worker/middle-class friendly lawmakers instead of these conservative ideologues would would sooner see you and I out on the streets.

And take a look at a few more of the articles available at <http://www.governmentisgood.com>.

When to Call (517) 353-4898 for Assistance - Know Your Contract

APA is a resource for all job-related issues, not just a representative in disciplinary matters. Many times we assist in problem solving through work place issues that may not be contractually related.

Topics that your union can provide assistance or resources:

- 1) Any contractual or employment law issue (a common issue is Family Medical Leave (FMLA))
- 2) Procedure for reclassification
- 3) Layoff information
- 4) Evaluations
- 5) Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)
- 6) Overtime/Compensatory Time issues
- 7) Call-in/Standby Pay issues
- 8) More information on Lunch and Learn topics
- 9) Suggestions on how to handle a challenging work interaction
- 10) Health care coverage issues

Don't let fear overcome your right to representation - Know Your Rights

If you are called in for a meeting with your supervisor that you believe may be an investigation that could lead to discipline you have a right to representation. You must ask for representation.

You may stop the discussion and call your representative (517) 353-4898. Asking for representation does not indicate you have done anything improper.

This right is your Weingarten Right: *the right to request assistance from union representatives during investigatory interviews.*

You also have a contractual right to representation:

-63 At any hearing, conference or meeting that may result in disciplinary action to an employee in the bargaining unit, the employee may and is encouraged to request the presence of an Association representative. The employing department must, if requested by the employee, allow sufficient time for the employee to arrange to have Association representation.

Article 10, Clause 63 of the APA Contract

Your Fellow APs

Interview with APA member Audrey Sebolt

Research Technician: Cherry Breeding & Genetics | Department of Horticulture

How long have you been at MSU?

I've been on the third floor of the Plant and Soil Sciences Building at Michigan State University since 1993. I transferred from Aquinas College (Grand Rapids, MI) to MSU to complete my bachelors degree and then continued on with my masters, working for the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences throughout both my degree programs. I've been working for my current boss, Dr. Amy Iezzoni, since 1999 in the Department of Horticulture for the Cherry Breeding and Genetics Lab.

Have you been a member of APA the whole time?

I was a member of the CT union and then became an APA member in 1999 when I started working with my current boss.

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

Since 2009, I have not just been a research technician, but also a half-time project assistant for [RosBREED](#). RosBREED is funded by the USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative. RosBREED's aim is to improve the fruit quality of apple, strawberry, peach, sweet cherry, and tart cherry and the project is a multi-national, multi-institutional program. Our budget is 14 million dollars (federal and matching funds) and the project director is my boss, Dr. Amy Iezzoni. RosBREED is a collaborative project that involves more than 30 professors and 15 graduate students located throughout the United States and in six different countries. My role is to communicate, collaborate, develop content and organize conferences with and for our participants. I feel very fortunate to be their project assistant and have enjoyed this experience; our research community is a great group to work with and our motto is "RosBREED never sleeps" because we have someone in almost every time zone in the world working on the project and getting things done.

When I'm not working for RosBREED, I spend my time working for the Michigan State University cherry breeding and genetics program, whose mission is to develop new and improved tart cherry varieties that are disease resistant, have improved fruit quality and will be more profitable to the Michigan cherry industry. Do you know that Michigan grows approximately 75% of the U.S. tart cherries? I spend the summers in the field and the winters in the lab running DNA diagnostics, virus testing, however, my most of my "lab" work now involves me sitting at a computer. Most of our DNA marker data has been generated by a core facility. We were able to generate more than 5 million data points in one week due to the efforts of RosBREED, so data is still being quality checked and analyzed. We are finally beginning to catch up to where soybean and corn genetic research is at, but we have a long way to go!

What brought you to MSU?

I grew up and worked on a fruit farm in Oceana County, MI. I had originally enrolled in the MSU engineering program, and though I enjoyed my classes, I just couldn't see myself as an engineer and wanted to go back to my agricultural roots - so I walked over to the Plant and Soil Science building and immediately felt like I was "home". I love what I do and feel it's vital to Michigan and the world. People need roads but I hope they are eating dried tart cherries on their way to work!

What do you love about working at MSU?

The best thing about working at MSU is that my job is never the same from day to day. I love my job and have a wonderful boss and work for a strong department and University. I appreciate their support and the strength of the APA union. Because of the APA Union, I feel I have a good health care package and retirement, considering the economy. The University is also a leader in agricultural research and I take pride in that as well as our beautiful campus - and who doesn't love the Dairy Store?

What are the challenges of your position on campus?

Our summer field research is not conducted on campus and therefore, a typical day in the field for me is very intense. Our research plots are located 50 miles west of campus at the MSU Clarksville Horticultural Research Station, located in Clarksville, MI. Because our research is off campus, we have to be extremely organized with our supplies and time management. We carry clipboards with to-do lists such as - weed this plot, take flower counts for our rootstock project (we are testing new rootstocks that we developed for sweet cherry), evaluate the crosses we made in the spring to see if we need to harvest the fruit, etc. It can be pretty intense because we have to be extremely productive - if we don't finish our to-do list, we are not able to just walk down the hall to finish the job.

Another challenge can be the long hours. Because I work in agriculture, the spring and summer days can be stressful. For example, during bloom time (end of April/early May) we conduct our crosses and if it gets really hot, the flowers open at a faster rate and therefore I have to work seven days a week for several days straight, up to 9 hours per day. In June and July our fruit begin to ripen and we have to start the harvest season. During harvest, we load the van with coolers, head to Clarksville, harvest until at about 3pm so that we can drive back to main campus, unload our coolers and then start taking our data measurements on the fruit. During peak fruit harvest, I'm working 60+ hours a week because the fruit will not hold on the trees - you have to harvest and then quickly evaluate the fruit or it will rot. Our data measurements on campus can get very tedious and monotonous. We record data for fruit and pit weight and shape as well as fruit firmness, color, sugars, and acidity. We end up generating millions of data points. It's a lot of data which we then enter into a computer in August and quality check. Once the fruit data is "good to go", we are then able to merge this data with our marker data I mentioned earlier to analyze and see if there are any markers that are correlated to our field data. I then help develop posters, presentations, reports and journal articles to present our results.

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

I enjoy gardening, cooking, jogging, traveling, and reading. I have a husband, seven-year-old son and four-year-old daughter and we love to play sports together - baseball, basketball and soccer. My family and I also love nature and we enjoy hiking and biking. I am my son's cub scout leader - for 14 second grade boys.

2nd Annual APA Picnic - Mark Your Calendar!

On Friday, June 8 from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., the MSU APA Union will hold its second annual picnic at Patriarche Park, located at the corner of Alton Road and East Saginaw Street in East Lansing.

Grilled hamburgers, hotdogs, side items and dessert will be provided, and there will be games and activities for the whole family. All APA members and their families are invited to attend and there is no charge for admission. The location is great for children, since there is a lot of playground equipment very close to the pavilion. The evening also serves as an opportunity for all to network, both socially and professionally. Be sure to mark the date on your calendars!

Saving Money Through Your Membership

Are you getting the most out of your APA membership? Many members are aware of the contract, benefits, and representation and just-cause protections guaranteed by their union membership, but may not know of the opportunities for savings we gain as members of MEA & NEA. Free or discounted services for life/home/auto insurance, shopping, dining, wireless plans, travel and more can be accessed through your membership card. APs have been known to recoup the equivalent of their dues through the savings programs offered to MEA/NEA members.

Free Life Insurance - Members are encouraged to activate their completely free life insurance policy that comes with membership. www.neamb.com/insurance/nea-complimentary-life-insurance.htm

MEA Financial Services - Purchase auto and homeowners insurance at a discount, buy annuities and mutual funds, long-term health care, and a VISA/MasterCard through MEA Financial Services at www.meafs.com or 517/351-2122 or 800/292-1950.

MEA/NEA Membership Card - Use your membership card to get savings around town. Show your card at restaurants, stores, and services to receive MEA discounts. To request a replacement card, please visit www.mea.org/contact/meacard_request.html.

MEA Member Services - Locate discounts on shopping, dining, dry cleaning, and other savings online in the "Members Only" tab at www.mea.org. Have your membership number ready.

NEA Member Services - Find even more savings on financial products, travel, shopping, wireless plans, and other goods and services can be found at www.neamb.com.

Passageways Travel - Airline tickets and travel packages at low group rates and discounts, and can be reached at 800/684-7384 or 517/353-9898.