

## **Protect Our Jobs Update**

Protect Our Jobs Coalition Submits Nearly 700,000 Signatures  
It took more than 130 boxes to hold the signed petitions turned in to the Secretary of State, moving the constitutional amendment protecting collective bargaining one step closer to being on the Nov. ballot. The Protect Our Jobs coalition turned in 684,286 signatures — more than twice the needed 322,609 valid signatures in advance of the July 9 deadline.

This was a massive team effort involving members of the MEA, other labor organizations, small businesses and faith-based organizations who gathered more signatures than any other recent ballot campaign has submitted.

This amendment to protect basic collective bargaining rights will help rebuild Michigan's middle class, protect the wages and benefits of workers, and grow Michigan's economy.

## July Political Update

by Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chairperson

A recent pleasant political surprise occurred when Governor Snyder vetoed the most egregious portions of recently passed voter suppression laws.

He vetoed SB 754 which would have required people, companies and organization involved in voter registration to be trained by the state. This is an approach that's been implemented in a variety of states, at the behest of a conservative alliance called ALEC and its primary purpose is not to reduce "voter fraud" (which data indicates is virtually completely nonexistent) but rather to suppress the typical urban and college based voter registration drives that organizations such as the League of Women Voters and others, particularly Democrat-related groups engage in. Voter registration is not difficult and the regulations regarding it are not difficult to follow. But there is a strong conservative element that would like to discourage "the wrong people" from voting. Typically this would be the "young and completely uninformed" and the urban poor.

Snyder also vetoed HB 5061 which would have added a redundant identification process for picking up an absentee ballot to one that already exists and SB 803, requiring voters to affirm their citizenship before voting or be denied the franchise. SB 803 is redundant because voters are already are required to declare their citizenship when they register.

Measures need to be taken to INCREASE voter participation, not to suppress participation.

Another kick in the teeth to you and I as regular folk were bills that lower the income tax rate a few months early, slightly, to 4.25 percent another that increases personal tax exemptions very slightly. These were designed to allow Republican lawmakers a chance to claim credit for "lowering the income tax" while running for re-election. Of course, these miniscule adjustments amount to less than a cup of coffee per week for average. They're hoping you and I IGNORE the fact that beginning with the 2012 tax year, there's been a HUGE effective increase in taxes on the poor and middle class in

Michigan. The Republican budget and tax changes about a year ago effectively increased taxes on 51% of Michigan taxpayers by hundreds of dollars. This was done by eliminating major tax credits you and I used, such as severely reducing or eliminating the the Homestead Property Tax Credit for seniors and for taxpayers making more than \$50,000 per year, and eliminating those for donations to food banks, shelters, and food kitchens and other charities. See <http://eclectablog.com/2012/02/tax-timebomb-that-explodes-in-michigan.html>.

So again, I'd say, who you vote for really does matter. And next year when you and I file our income tax returns we're going to find out just how much.

Enjoy that extra weekly cup of coffee before Jan 1, 2013!!

## **Know Your Contract – Benefits Besides Wages and Health**

We all know that wages and health coverage are the top issues when someone is looking for a job, but the other benefits in a union contract can make the difference in quality working conditions and quality of life.

Benefits provided by your bargained contract

(<http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/APA2011-2015.pdf>) include:

- Vacation Leave, Article 21
- Personal Leave, Article 22
- Holiday Pay, Article 23
- Sick Leave (including an increased amount of sick leave available to be used for family illness), Article 24
- Military Leave to attend school full-time, Article 25
- Longevity Pay, Article 28
- Jury Duty Pay, Article 29
- Military Duty Pay, Article 30
- Bereavement Leave, Article 31
- Extended Disability Leave and Long-Term Disability coverage, Article 37 and Article 39
- Educational Assistance, Article 41  
[http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/ss\\_prodev/tuitionAssist.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/ss_prodev/tuitionAssist.htm)
- Human Resources Development HRD, Article 41  
<http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/index.htm>
- Course Fee Courtesy (tuition for your dependents and spouse), Article 42  
[http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/ss\\_prodev/tuitionAssist.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/ss_prodev/tuitionAssist.htm)
- Retirement Plan, Article 43  
(<http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement/index.htm>)

The Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) provides the right to bargain collectively for all wages, hours and working conditions ([www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-336-of-1947.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-336-of-1947.pdf)). If the members of APA were not organized in a union with

rights to collectively bargain, these benefits would be up to the sole discretion of the University and could be unilaterally changed. If you have any other questions or concerns regarding your particular working conditions, please contact the APA office at (517) 353—4898 or at [msuapa@msu.edu](mailto:msuapa@msu.edu).

## **Your Fellow APs**

Louis Hengesbach  
Accountant I

As a 2010 graduate of Michigan State University, Louis began working at the Physical Plant about a year and a half ago.

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

One of my main tasks at the Physical Plant involves the purchasing process. I reconcile five warehouse accounts between the Quali Financial System and the Physical Plant billing system. I also run daily purchasing audits for the interface between both systems. I have been involved in the MSU Way – ECOS project and the Cognos Query Studio project. Currently, I have been working on year end labor reports and campus building data, which is now at 530 buildings and over 22 million square feet.

*What brought you to your job at MSU?*

Starting at MSU my freshman year I never thought about who maintained the buildings, classrooms, sidewalks, utilities, or landscape on campus. And I definitely didn't know that a majority of that was handled by one division. However, about half way into my freshman year I was lucky enough to have a chance for an interview for an open student position at the Physical Plant. Now it's been almost five years and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work in this office and to continue learning about this division.

*What do you love about working at MSU?*

I love the work environment and campus as a whole. After graduation I debated other career options, but the experiences I gained here as a student and getting to know other employees at the Physical Plant as well as around campus made my decision extremely easy. Work is much more enjoyable when you have great coworkers and know that everyone takes pride in making our campus better.

*Can you tell me a little about the benefits and challenges of working at MSU's Physical Plant?*

I'd say one of the main challenges is communication between departments, as well as outside customers. Reaching out to customers so that they have a full understanding of projects happening around campus, as well as understanding the issues they might have can be difficult. As a way to help this communication, two quick links have been added to the Physical Plant webpage ([pp.msu.edu](http://pp.msu.edu)). One link provides information on Construction Updates around campus and the other is the online service request form which allows users to track the processing of their requests online. With such a large campus it can be hard to keep everyone on the same page, but I believe that having the online options to track projects can be a huge advantage.

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

Outside of work I enjoy playing and watching sports. This past December I bought a house and got married, so it's been a pretty busy year! But spending time with my wife and working on the house is what I like to do most.

## **2012 NEA RA**

The National Education Association Representative Assembly (NEA RA) was in full swing last week. Along with the officers, MEA was represented by nearly 400 delegates who spent the weekend addressing issues of the union and attending special interest caucus meetings. Other groups, such as the National Council of Urban Education Association, NEA-Retired and NEA Student Leadership also held meetings.

During the RA, hundreds of NEA volunteers gave Maryland's Thomas Johnson Middle School a facelift through NEA's Student Program's "Outreach to Teach" event. The NEA also held its Joint Conference on Concerns of Minorities and Women.

The NEA RA officially kicked off with NEA President Dennis Van Roekel's address to the delegates. Vice President Joe Biden spoke to the assembly on July 3. On July 4 and 5, delegates introduce, debated, and voted on proposed items for the NEA to pursue during the next year. The business of the RA concluded on July 5.

## **APA Discusses Dental Options**

In the last round of negotiations, it was a priority of APA to address the low coverage of the base Delta Dental Plan and the restricted access of the Aetna DMO Dental Plan. The result of the negotiations was a Letter of Agreement that required the University to meet with APA to reach a mutual resolution on the dental coverage for our members by December 31, 2012. This way any changes in dental benefits would go into effect July 1, 2013.

Contractually, the Aetna DMO Dental Plan premium must not be higher than the base Delta Dental Plan. In 2012, the premium for Aetna rose above the premium for base Delta plan. This caused the University to request a discussion with APA and most of the unions on campus regarding the dental coverage.

The APA has been meeting the University to discuss the legitimate member concerns regarding the low annual maximum of \$600 for the Delta Dental base plan and the restricted coverage of the Aetna DMO. The APA has run comparisons across both the Big 10 Universities and the in-state colleges and universities; no one has the low level of coverage that MSU provides for its employees.

The goal is to gain better access and quality of care for our members. The APA will be meeting over the next six months with the University to reach mutual resolution on the issue. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your dental coverage, please contact the APA office at (517) 353-4898.

## **Making a PAC Contribution**

Members of a collective organization such as the APA/MEA are well advised to make political action committee (PAC) contributions so that our influence can be aggregated and increased far beyond that of a single individual. You can use the “members-only” area of [www.mea.org](http://www.mea.org) to access an online form to make your PAC contribution. Such contributions will be used to support recommended candidates, particularly those in a contestable election.

Most APA members will first have to create their log in, but once you’ve set that up, navigating to the page and making a contribution is pretty straightforward.

## Summer Events

Summer is here and APA members are having fun in the sun! APA has been busier than ever planning membership activities – including a membership picnic hosted in June, and a planned outing to a Lugnuts game on August 5. Many volunteers have come together and worked hard to organize fantastic summer events.

Over one hundred members joined their colleagues and families on June 8, 2012 for food and fun at Patriarche Park! The event marked the second annual picnic hosted by the APA and proved again to be a popular experience. Participants shared conversation over grilled hotdogs and hamburgers and met individuals from all across campus. Many kids left the park with colorful Play-Doh sculptures, fanciful creations, and table prizes. Featured this year, APA member and artist Derrick Turner crafted caricatures of many picnic-goers. However, summer fun is not over yet! Planned for Sunday, August 5th at 2:05 pm, the APA invites you to join fellow APs for the Lansing Lugnuts game at the Cooley Law School Stadium. This event brings APA members and their families together for a day of fun and baseball.

For every adult ticket purchased by an APA member, 2 child tickets (ages 3-17) will be provided free of charge. Each adult ticket is \$10 and may be purchased at [https://www.what-if.com/SECURE/LLB/grouporder/LL\\_12\\_MSU\\_APA.html](https://www.what-if.com/SECURE/LLB/grouporder/LL_12_MSU_APA.html) August 5th is also Kids Day! Families can play catch on the field from 1:00pm – 1:30pm. Kids can run the bases for free immediately following the game. An APA member is guaranteed to win a Lugnuts gift during the Group Raffle! Also, our group photo will be taken and posted on the Lugnuts website, where it can be downloaded for free.

We hope you will join us for a day of fun and baseball!

## **Save the Date – Walk to End Alzheimer’s 9/8/12**

Walk to End Alzheimer’s Saturday September 8th

The Community Outreach Committee needs your help! We are forming a team to participate in the Walk to End Alzheimer’s and need walkers! The walk is the nation’s largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer’s care, support and research. There are no registration fees, however each participant is expected to fundraise in order to contribute to the cause and raise awareness.

The Community Outreach Committee has packets available for team participants. The walk will be held Saturday September 8, 2012 at the State Capitol. To register for the team or to receive additional information contact Nick Boarland [bourlan2@msu.edu](mailto:bourlan2@msu.edu) or Deb Porter [porterd@msu.edu](mailto:porterd@msu.edu).

## **Recommended Candidates Listing**

MEA maintains a listing of recommended candidates for offices in Michigan that is constantly updated as decisions are made. In some races, and Screening and Recommendation will occur before the August primary, and in most, before the general election in November.

We encourage members to consult the listing and vote for the recommended candidates on the ballot.

See <http://www.mea.org/mo-political-action> for the current listings, and consult it again before each election to see who is most friendly to our interests in education, labor, and the middle class.

## **APA Website Updates**

The APA has asked APA member Todd Ring to help the communications committee make changes to the APA website. Some of these changes will be visual and some of them will not. During the next several months, as these changes occur, if you have any trouble accessing anything on the web site please feel free to contact Todd at [ringt@msu.edu](mailto:ringt@msu.edu) and put APA website in the subject line. Additionally if you have any suggestions please relay them as well. All suggestions will be presented to the communication committee for approval before any implementation. Here are some of the current approved changes that will be taking place in the coming months.

1. Add a calendar of events
2. Add a twitter stream to follow MSUAPA
3. Add a new page for the Lunch and Learn meetings with the date and topics (also included on the calendar)
4. Add a calendar quick view to the main page
5. Convert some of the current Posts to Pages

So if you see some changes and things are not looking quite right, relax, take a breath, blink, and then take a second look. An update will be provided in upcoming newsletters, as well as a page on the web site to keep everyone updated. A very special thanks to Todd for his hard work!