

APA September/October 2012 Newsletter

Collective Bargaining Amendment – Your Vote Matters on November 6

On September 5, the Michigan Supreme Court unanimously rejected a challenge from corporate special interests to block a vote on a proposal that preserves collective bargaining for working families.

The initiative will officially be on the Nov. 6 ballot.

“Collective bargaining is a basic right for working families,” said Angelique Peterson a member of UAW Local 245 in Dearborn. “We will fight for it and win in November.” Corporate special interests pushed Lansing politicians to pressure the court leading up to the September 5 decision. But there was no legal reason to deny people the opportunity to vote on the proposal.

The Court of Appeals previously ordered the Board of State Canvassers to put the proposal on the ballot after the board deadlocked on the action.

The campaign collected nearly 700,000 signatures and the Secretary of State validated that more than enough valid signatures were submitted to put the proposal on the ballot. Governor Rick Snyder and Attorney General Bill Schuette took the unprecedented action of requesting the Court of Appeals deny citizens the right to vote on the proposal.

“Corporate special interests have spent millions and will spend millions more to mislead voters and silence our voice to negotiate for fair wages, benefits and working conditions that benefit us all,” said Cheryl Weston, a 31-year nurse who works at McLaren Lapeer Region Medical Center.

Last week, the Protect Our Jobs campaign announced that more than 500 small business owners across Michigan support the right of working families to collectively bargain. “Collective bargaining lifts wages for everyone and when working families have more income, they spend it at small businesses in their communities,” said Mary Apps, owner of Fraser Flower and Gifts. “That helps us invest in our businesses and the surrounding community, strengthening our ties.”

On the November 6 ballot, Michigan voters will get the chance to vote yes on this initiative and maintain democracy in the workplace.

Legislative Update – Protect Working Families and other ballot questions

By Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chair

The biggest and happiest news is that the critical constitutional amendment, now dubbed Protect Working Families, will be on the November ballot. The language in this amendment locks in rights of people like you and I to have strong, politically unmolested collective bargaining rights. Passage would roll back some terribly onerous changes in Michigan law and will serve to increase the economic safety of Michigan workers and their families.

It is absolutely critical that every one of our members not only vote for this, but that we deliver the votes of family members and friends. We must use every influence to bring this amendment to victory.

Another ballot measure that I heartily support is the measure to repeal the absolutely outrageous Emergency Financial Manager laws. The EFM has been an economic weapon of terror unleashed upon public school and municipal workers. It has been government power abused in the worst possible way – abrogating the authority of elected officials, and nullifying the will of the voting public.

On the other hand, additional measures will be in front of voters that simply must NOT be passed.

The amendment to require a 2/3 majority of the legislature to raise taxes effectively makes the state a hostage to just 13 Michigan Senators. Yes, no matter how justifiable and what the margin of passage in the House might be, a simple refusal of 1/3 of the Senate would prevent passage of a revenue bill. This misguided measure was bought and paid for by the same wealthy individual who has financed the faux “let the people vote” measure on the new bridge to Canada. Defeat of this measure is almost as critical as passage of the working families amendment.

Lastly, the bridge amendment. This one, together with the tax proposition, are huge examples of how a wealthy person or company can completely game the system of ballot initiatives and Constitutional amendments here in Michigan.

We must use our informed voting en masse to make sure that the voting franchise exceeds the power of wealth.

Know Your Contract – PERA

The Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) is the reason you, as a public employee, have a contract of negotiated wages, hours, terms and working conditions at MSU. This law was passed in 1947 and amended to include public employees in 1965. It was signed into law by Governor George Romney. The primary point of the law was to ensure a fair and consistent process of discipline and allow public employees to bargain collectively. <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-336-of-1947.pdf>

There will be great debate this election season about the right to collectively bargain because Proposal 2 – Protect Working Families – will be on the November 6 ballot. Why should you care about this issue as a professional public employee? Without the right to collectively bargain, the University would be allowed to change your benefits and any of your working conditions anytime at will. The jobs at MSU are good quality of life jobs. APA/MEA work daily to ensure the benefits and rights you have today will also be the rights you have tomorrow. For more information: <http://protectourjobs.com/>.

As a member of APA, you are a public employee. Public employees are at the subject to the Legislature for collective bargaining laws and funding for Michigan State University. The fundamental principal that is provided under a union contract is just cause for discipline. Just cause is a legal standard that determines where discipline is appropriate and requires the University to follow progressive discipline. In a non-unionized setting, employees are at will, which means they can be terminated for any reason as long as it does not violate discrimination laws. As an APA member, you are represented by the Michigan Education Association (MEA), which has the resources to represent you through any job related legal process.

Most people believe they will never be disciplined because they are good employees. Some go as far as to say being in a union does not matter. However, hard-working and conscientious employees run into situations every day that need union representation, and not necessarily on discipline issues. Evaluations, working hours, overtime, or Family Medical Leave are a few of the issues of concern to members.

The mandatory topics that APA/MEA bargains for you are wages, hours and working conditions. That means your health care, your workday, your retirement are all covered. Right now the APA/MEA and other labor organizations on campus are meeting with the University to work on your dental coverage. The goal is to enhance the coverage and access that has not been improved in a very long time.

To see all the aspects of your job that are currently protected by your contract go to http://www.msuapa.org/?page_id=24 or the pdf <http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/APA2011-2015.pdf>. If you would like a hard copy of the contract, please contact the APA office at (517) 353-4898.

Your Fellow APs

Patricia Hampton
Accountant | Office of Sponsored Programs

How long have you been at MSU?
28 years, will be 29 years on March 4, 2013

Have you been a member of the APA the whole time?
No, since December 24, 2009

Can you tell me a little bit about what you do? Specifically, more about the Office of Sponsored Programs and its function, and how your position supports the office.
As a Sponsored Programs Accountant, I review faculty proposals to outside funding agencies, including proposal solicitations primarily from the federal government, review budget variables and calculations, review award agreements, including the legal language incorporated, and provide grant assistance to Principle Investigator's and departmental administrators.

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) is a unit under the Vice President for Research and Graduate studies with an organizational affiliation to the CFO and Controller. Our mission is to provide superior pre-award support to faculty, staff, and the Contract & Grant Administration.

What do you enjoy most about working at MSU?
The diversity of people I interact with on a daily basis.

Can you tell me about the benefits and challenges of working for Sponsored Programs?
Benefits include a flexible work schedule, the opportunity for additional professional development (internally and externally), knowledge of grant regulations and processes, great satisfaction knowing that you assisted the Principle Investigator and departmental administrators to the best of your ability, the variety of job responsibilities, and always being able to learn new things.

Challenges include a heavy workload that can be stressful, keeping up with requests from federal agencies and responding in a timely fashion when information is needed to be obtained from multiple parties

What are your favorite things to do when you are not at work?
I enjoy attending sporting events that my kids participate in at school, visiting my 103 year old grandmother, and traveling.

All Member Canvass

Volunteers are currently in the process of talking to their fellow APs as part of the APA All Member Canvass. This all-inclusive initiative to contact and interact with every member aligns with the Association's ongoing efforts to expand and enhance union – member dialogue. Over the 2012-2013 academic year, volunteers will be contacting the entire membership to set up times to participate in this important process.

Trained, impartial canvassers will be seeking individual perspectives of MSU and APA. The volunteers will focus on listening to and reporting on the interests, values, concerns, and needs affecting our daily work lives. Names will not be attached to shared information and members are asked to be candid. Following the completion of the Canvass an action plan will be generated and shared with the membership.

The Association hopes you will participate in this ongoing effort. Please contact Nick Bourland, Membership Committee Chairperson, at bourlan2@msu.edu or 517-353-4898 with any questions or if you are interested in volunteering as a canvasser.