

APA November/December 2012 Newsletter

Proposal 2 to Protect Collective Bargaining

Proposal 2 to Protect Collective Bargaining released a new 30-second ad that shows how collective bargaining helps working families get their jobs done the Michigan way – through hard work.

Collective bargaining gives working families a voice to negotiate for fair wages, benefits and safer working conditions that are good for us all.

Collective bargaining protects the basic right of working families to have a voice in their workplace. Proposal 2 doesn't give workers any rights they do not already possess. Opponents of collective bargaining are scared they may lose the ability to arbitrarily cut jobs, ship them overseas or reduce wages.

Jobs covered by collective bargaining decreased by about 10 percent from 1989 to 2010, according to the Economic Policy Institute. During that same time span, the average annual pay adjusted for inflation dropped by about \$6,000 even as productivity increased by nearly 30 percent, according to the EPI.

States with higher levels of unionization have lower poverty levels, higher average incomes, lower workplace deaths, higher educational outcomes, and higher pension and health insurance coverage, according to Policy Matters Ohio, a nonpartisan think tank. Corporate bosses hide behind shadowy front groups to purchase or reserve more than \$22 million in ads riddled with lies, misleading information and fear mongering. A loophole in the Michigan Campaign Finance law lets the groups off the hook from revealing who is bankrolling them.

Corporate special interests have vowed to do whatever it takes to eliminate the right of working families to have a voice in the workplace. These special interests pressure Lansing politicians to pass laws that weaken worker rights and circumvent previously negotiated contracts.

Collective bargaining gives firefighters and police officers a voice to negotiate for life-saving equipment, protects nurses who speak up about a patient's care and gives teachers smaller class sizes so they can better educate our children. It is collective bargaining that has afforded us at MSU our current health care coverage, wages, and retirement plan.

Vote Yes on Proposal 2 to protect collective bargaining. For more information, visit www.protectworkingfamilies.com.

Final Days; Final Thoughts – Legislative Update

By Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chair

Tuesday, November 6 is rapidly approaching. I write this on the day of the final debate between President Obama and his challenger. You'll find a link to the MEA Voter Guide elsewhere in this issue. So rather than duplicate information, I'm going to focus on how I hope APA members make their voting decisions.

First and foremost, members must decide to vote. It ought to go without saying, but the fact is roughly 1 out of 3 people who could vote in the national election do not do so. Even if our collective participation rate is higher, if 20 percent of you do not vote that is 500 people who are failing to exercise this critical civic duty. So first point – VOTE! Participate!

Second, please vote on an informed basis. This means different things for different people. For me, I start with my own general principles of support for economic justice, workers' rights/safety/collective bargaining rights and support, support for women's health rights, and science-based positions on climate change, fossil fuels, energy, etc. and even education of our children. (I am not a fan of religious intrusion into public education for instance).

Since I cannot know all candidates directly, I then turn to trusted organizations like MEA for screening decisions and I use that information to guide me in casting a vote for those offices and people less familiar to me – the nonpartisan/court races in particular. On ballot issues I apply the same principles and guidance as well as looking at the analysis of organizations like Michigan's Citizens Research Council. Armed with all of that, I cast my vote and I guarantee you I do not completely subscribe to the MEA guidance in all cases.

I hope you engage in similar considerations as you ponder your vote.

Now, many of you will have already cast your votes. While Michigan's absentee balloting is not quite "no-excuse required" it is relatively easy to qualify. Casting an absentee ballot provides an opportunity to avoid the long lines that are expected this year due to the excessive number of ballot proposals to consider. If you haven't already requested one and can qualify you have until Saturday November 3 at 2pm to request one from your local clerk.

Interestingly, where no-excuse absentee balloting is allowed, voter turnout and participation is already very robust. This makes it plain to me that Americans will participate if the convenience to do so is increased. Unfortunately, quite the opposite has been happening here in Michigan and in our neighbor state, Ohio, where deliberate attempts to scare and intimidate certain demographics have been reflected by requiring duplicative assertion of citizenship, reduction of early voting opportunities, etc. See

some other thoughts on the subject written for the Muskegon Chronicle -
http://www.mlive.com/opinion/muskegon/index.ssf/2012/09/david_kolb_the_absentee_ballot.html

So to my earlier list of my principles, add encouraging voters/voting rights and convenience for ALL voters. The voter suppression tactics widely engaged in this year are frankly utterly disgusting.

Know Your Contract – Wages

In the October 31 paycheck, APA members saw an across the board increase of one percent (1%) to base wages and an additional one percent (1%) lump sum calculated from the member's September 30 base salary rate. Due to the staggered bargaining cycle of each labor organization on campus, APA will receive a two percent (2%) increase on base wages in October 2013 and a two percent (2%) increase on base wages in October 2014. The 2013 and 2014 raises will incorporate a portion based on merit.

In addition, special merit salary increases may be granted during the contract year with appropriate approvals outside of the standard increases (Article 17, Clause 131 of the Master Agreement).

The APA contract also provides a Salary Progression Level in Article 17 that increases base salary for those employees whose performance is satisfactory and whose salary has not yet reached the progression level amount (which is one hundred twenty-five (125%) percent of the minimum hiring level).

All of these wage increases are negotiated under the right to collectively bargain with the University. These wages and process is enforceable and consistent. For these reasons and many other local control issues, it is critical that APA members Vote Yes on Michigan's Proposal 2 on the November 6 general election ballot. If you need more information on the right to collectively bargain please go to <http://protectworkingfamilies.com>.

If you have any questions regarding wage increases or any other employment question, please call the APA office at (517) 353-4898 or e-mail msuapa@msu.edu

Your Fellow APs

Derek Dubuque | Administrative Assistant
Health4U Program and Employee Assistance Program, University Physician's Office

How long have you been at MSU?

Since August 21, 2002.

Have you been a member of APA the whole time?

Nope: I began as an undergraduate in 2002, came back as a graduate student in 2007, started my current position in 2010, and became an APA member in June 2011.

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

As the Administrative Assistant for two programs in the University Physician's Office, I'm responsible for a good variety of tasks. These include, but are not limited to: phone and e-mail correspondence; client scheduling and assistance; office management; budget reconciliation; statistics assessment and evaluation; program and event planning and scheduling; some web maintenance and updating; and whatever else I can do to ease the work lives of my colleagues. And, of course, I like to say that a good portion of my job is "other duties as assigned" – there's always something new to explore!

What brought you to your job at MSU?

Serendipity, I imagine. As mentioned above, I had been around campus for a good few years, most often as a student, but always working in some capacity for a unit on campus. After graduate school, I was hoping to find work in the area, and I was fortunate enough to receive a temp placement in my current office. Just being employed was a blessing, but to be happily so – I couldn't wait for the chance to apply for the real thing.

What do you love about working at MSU?

First and foremost, the people. My colleagues are amazing, both professionally and interpersonally, and offered a perfect blend of challenge and support to me from day one. They truly are the best at what they do. My position also allows me to interact with a wide variety of individuals in all manner of roles from across campus (and our colleagues outside of East Lansing, as well!), new and old. (That is, folks that I know from "way back when.") It's a great sense of community.

And, of course, campus is beautiful this time of year – any time of year, really!

Can you tell me a little about the benefits and challenges of your job?

The biggest benefit in my mind is the access I have to breadth of knowledge and experience, from my colleagues, as well as from the programs and services they offer. (Fun fact: I attended the "Relaxing Under the Stars" program well before I even knew what the Health4U Program was – I knew these folks were onto something!)

The greatest challenge is probably the matter of awareness. I would love for everyone on campus to be able to sign up for our services – especially those that could really use what

we can offer, and just don't know that we're here, or that we have so much to offer. But outreach can be challenging: finding just the right way to reach out and show everyone how we can help, without overwhelming them with information.

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

I enjoy spending time with my wife (married for 3 months and counting!) and our two kitties. Reading, playing games (board and video alike), and taking walks through the changing leaves. I have a few "appointment" TV shows that might take up a weeknight or two, and I also like to read up on science and tech blogs. All around, looking very much forward to what the future holds.

Become More Involved In Your Union

The Michigan Education Association (MEA) provides our local organization, the MSU – Administrative Professional Association (APA), with excellent tools and resources. We can count on extensive legal services, trained and thorough advocacy staff, research data for negotiation and contract defense, capacity for job actions regardless of size and scope, legislative monitoring, both member and organization liability insurances, leadership and member development training, facilities and overhead services, and many other valuable assets. However, like any collective bargaining organization, our greatest strength is our members and their willingness to stay informed and stand together.

The APA is always looking for members interested in helping our organization, education and collective bargaining causes, and our surrounding community. Some of the many ways APs can become involved include:

- Helping conduct All-Member Canvass interviews
- Attending Lunch & Learns and Community Lunches to stay informed
- Serving as an APA Area Representative
- Distributing information and materials
- Organizing charitable initiatives through the Community Based Events Committee
- Volunteering for legislative information initiatives

Members interested in political involvement can become involved in the MEA-PAC, a separate political action organization funded by member donations. No dues dollars can go to candidates. Your involvement can be crucial during elections for the causes of education and collective bargaining.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with APA or the PAC, please contact Nick Bourland, APA Vice President and Membership Committee Chair, at bourlan2@msu.edu or 517-353-4898.