

APA May/June 2013 Newsletter

Who's Behind The Acts of Anti-Union Governors?

Efforts to curb the rights of workers are nothing new, but the antics went from sideshow to center stage in 2010 when deep-pocketed patrons helped radical conservative candidates, like Governors Rick Snyder, R-Mich., Scott Walker, R-Wisc., and John Kasich, R-Ohio, win elections across the country.

After winning, the governors signed anti-worker laws as part of a well-coordinated attempt to undermine collective bargaining—giving the same old song and dance about how their actions would balance budgets. In reality, they harmed the middle class and drove down wages. Let's see who's really pulling the strings.

Conservative Think Tanks

What the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) does at the national level, affiliates of the [State Policy Network](#) do locally—both aggressively peddle policy recommendations that denigrate unions and pound the anti-taxes drum. These conservative “think tanks” see public schools as perhaps the last untapped frontier of corporate opportunity, so it's in their interest to reduce local control and go after educator unions. Much of the work is done by courting GOP lawmakers and “advising” new governors.

Deep-Pocketed Funders

Oh, how the money to assault workers' rights has flowed! ALEC's allies include the billionaire Koch brothers who are well-known for [funding think tanks and foundations](#) that push radical right-wing policies. Thanks to the 2010 Citizens United decision—which made it okay for corporations to spend unlimited funds on advertisements to support or oppose candidates for federal office, as long as those ads are created independent of the campaigns they support—these groups can pump more money into the campaigns of favored candidates.

Just look at Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker. By last summer, his biggest donors were out-of-state billionaires bent on making sure he survived recall elections brought by outraged citizens. Don't believe it? Diane Hendricks, Walker's top donor, made her intentions clear. A [camera caught her](#) telling Walker to make Wisconsin a red state and “work on these unions.”

CEOs on Corporate Welfare

Hands off my loopholes! That's this group's battle cry. Rather than pay their fare share, they'd like to see those connected to public education go years without a salary increase. Ohio Gov. John Kasich's performance is keeping the corporate crowd's handouts intact,

and allowing education funding to fall lower than it was when Kasich took office. Kasich has also diverted scarce education dollars to private education projects.

Likeminded Legislators

Overreaching governors need these folks to help push the false choice between protecting workers' rights and attracting new business. Some state legislators are also looking for a scapegoat to cover up past sins with the budget. Our very own Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder's 2011 budget proposed a \$2 billion tax cut for business, while jacking up income tax rates for low-income families by another 1.1 percent. Snyder and Co. have since rammed through a so-called "right-to-work" law without one public hearing, though most of the state's voters opposed it.

Misinformed voters

Exhausted by decades of anti-worker vitriol, too many citizens have been duped into believing that public unions are to blame for state budget crises and lagging student performance. The real story: The forces behind the curtain have more access to our lawmakers today than ever before, but the collective voice of workers is one of their most powerful checks and balances.

Who can cut the strings?

Well-informed activists who care about workers' rights, public education, and the middle class are looking forward to 2014, when they will have the chance to speak out with their voice and their vote against these extremist governors and their supporting casts. Become one of them.

How Do I Get a Raise?

One of the highest ranked concerns of any professional employee group is wages, and APA is no different. Your bargained contract provides numerous ways your salary can be increased in addition to your established benefits and other compensation.

Bargained Wage Increase

APA and the Coalition of Labor Organizations (CLO) at MSU bargain collectively a wage and health care agreement that includes across the board wage increases. The current agreement runs through December 31, 2013. <http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/JHCC-MOU.pdf>.

The current APA Contract runs through September 30, 2015. Under the APA the contract, there will be a two percent (2%) wage increase on October 1, 2013. There will be an additional two percent (2%) wage increase on October 1, 2014. The wage increase will be distributed according to the 60% merit and 40% across-the-board formula found in Article 17 of the APA Contract and the Letter of Agreement on Merit Guidelines. All wage increase funds allocated to a unit must be distributed to members in the bargaining unit.

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

Salary Progression Level Increase

The APA Contract provides an automatic increase for those members whose wages are below the Progression Level amounts found in Article 17 IV of the contract. Each January eligible employees shall receive a three percent (3%) increase up to the Progression Level amount.

Off Schedule Merit Salary Increase

A unit can give a raise at any time for any amount. It is called an off-schedule merit salary raise. There are no maximum salaries for any grade level. There is no contractual restriction on a member receiving a raise and a member can request a raise at any time. Requesting a raise during the annual review period is particularly appropriate.

Reclassification

Job duties for a member's current position may change enough to require a reclassification of their position. The salary for position reclassified and promoted to a higher grade level can be no lower than the minimum salary for the higher grade level.

A reclassification for a position is typically requested through the unit administrator, but the APA can request a review through the Assistant Vice President of Human Resources. The Office of Resource Staffing Services reviews the requests for reclassification.

Promotion

A change to a higher grade level as a promotion under the APA Contract requires a minimum of a five percent (5%) wage increase for one grade level increased and ten percent (10%) for two or more levels increased or placed at the minimum of the higher grade level, whichever is greater. The provisions of a promotion can be found in Article 15 of the APA Contract.

Equity Review

An equity review can be requested to bring a member's wages in line with other individuals in the unit and/or on campus with similar years of University service and job classification. Contact Human Resources Staffing Service Office at 353-3720.

Please contact the APA Office with any further questions or concerns at (517) 353-4898 or msuapa@msu.edu.

Your Fellow APs

This month's featured APA member is Joshua Wortz, Information Technologist I who serves as a Systems Administrator for Collaborative Services & Support @ IT Services.

How long have you been at MSU? Have you held other positions prior to your current one at the University?

I began at MSU in October 2009 at the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This past November I moved to IT services

Can you tell me a little about what you do? Any specific projects you are working on?

I work with the Content Services and Support group, supporting the new CampusAD Active Directory and Exchange environment and Office 365. (CampusAD is an Active Directory [AD] infrastructure that allows units on campus to more easily collaborate with others by securely sharing resources with other CampusAD users. For more information on the project, visit <http://tech.msu.edu/campusad/>)

What brought you to your job at MSU?

I grew up in Battle Creek, MI and after attending college and lived near Philadelphia for a few years. After my wife and I had kids, we wanted to move closer to family so I found a job at MSU and moved the family to Michigan.

What do you love about working at MSU?

I enjoy the camaraderie of being a Spartan and the family friendly atmosphere

Can you share a little about the challenges of working at MSU?

In 2011 my son was 4 years old and was diagnosed with Autism. When we began to seek out the therapies that he needed, we discovered that Autism was an excluded from receiving the needed speech and occupational therapies. This has put a financial and emotional stress on my family.

What are your favorite things to do when not at work?

I love spending time with my wife and 2 kids (Brayden 5 & Ava 4). I started coaching a special needs kids soccer team in Charlotte through AYSO. I am also studying for the MCAT in July and I will begin applying to medical schools in this June.

The Millionaire Party

Leo Sell, Legislative Committee Chairperson

Last issue some were disturbed by what they viewed as a partisan attack. Honestly, it is difficult to be “nonpartisan” when there is so much economic injustice, incessant attacks on: human rights (women, GLBT persons), labor/worker rights, workplace protections, environmental protections, and on and on.

All that aside, though, one might ask if the Democratic party truly offers a credible alternative. Frankly, in many ways, that party does not. Why am I inclined to say that? Because of the “Millionaire Party”.

I just encountered an interesting observation in a posting at the Washington Post wonkblog. On May 6, Ezra Klein cited the work of Duke Professor Nick Barnes regarding an active (but not formal) political party composed of the millionaires (and above) within this country. Although less than 10 percent of the population is so wealthy, if they composed a political party, it would have a super-majority (more than 2/3, therefore veto-proof) of the U.S. Senate, a majority of the House, a 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court, and the Presidency.

It’s no wonder the interests of the average middle class person fare so poorly..... Professor Barnes went on to state that if the “class composition” of the Congress reflected the American populace, there would be from one to three additional progressive economic policies passed, PER CONGRESS.

In a May 7th column by Dylan Matthews examined various premises regarding wealthy interests and political outcomes. There are leanings and there are cause and effects related more to the composition of legislative districts than to income per se. And while much gets passed that is supported by both high income and low income constituencies, there is a built-in prejudice toward the views of the rich. From BOTH parties. The views of the rich get enacted, to quote specifically.

This has made for some interesting outcomes. To quote directly from the column:
The poor hated the MX missile and the rich weakly favored it; they were deployed. The rich like free trade, the poor opposed it; NAFTA and GATT were enacted. Democrats’ social views are much more representative of rich elites than most people. The rich tend to have laissez-faire attitudes toward abortion, same-sex marriage, and school prayer, while the poor are more conservative. The former attitude is better represented than the latter.

...representativeness may not be the be-all and end-all of a democratic system. Mark Schmitt, responding to Gilens’ book, noted that the nadir of representativeness of all income groups, according to Gilens, was Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency, which

featured the enactment of the Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, Medicare, Medicaid, and the rest of the Great Society, and the peak was during George W. Bush's first term. Everyone hated Johnson's agenda, while Bush's enjoyed broad support, including from the poor. That just goes to show that just because the poor want something doesn't mean that it actually advances their interests.

Suffice it to say that the wealthy and corporate interests have done an excellent job of distracting much of the voting population away from their own interests. They do this with what I refer to as "bright shiny objects". We can examine that proposition more fully in a later issue.

Meanwhile, I suggest you all join me in having a healthy skepticism about the motivations all the well-to-do politicians and work more to find and vote for people like you and me. Trust me, those we are electing, whether Dems or Republicans, are really not all that benign when it comes to the interests of working people. Quite the opposite, in fact.

APA Members Have Access to Employee Rights Experts

One of the biggest advantages of MEA membership is the service provided directly to members by MEA's local UniServ directors. APA UniServ Directors are Melissa Sortman and Tanya Pratt.

These highly trained professional labor relations consultants help APA members access a wide variety of services available only to members.

"MEA's UniServ program is the core of our association, and provides members with easy and convenient access to a wide range of essential services," said MEA Executive Director Gretchen Dziadosz, who served members for many years as a UniServ director in the Grand Rapids area. "MEA membership provides school employees with numerous advantages for their careers, for their rights, for their wallets and for public education, and UniServ directors are trained to deliver those advantages directly to members."

Here's just a sample of what UniServ directors help members with:

- Contract bargaining and interpretation
- Grievance processing
- Job security protection
- Problem-solving advice for work issues
- Retirement concerns
- Development of training programs to meet specific local needs
- Employee counseling for work-related problems
- Presentation of arbitration cases
- Unemployment compensation representation
- Bargaining crisis preparation
- Development of local public relations programs
- Assistance in governance matters
- Processing civil rights violations
- Assisting members with accessing member-only benefits

To contact your UniServ staff call (517) 353-4898 or e-mail msuapa@msu.edu.

Questions From The Trenches

What is MSU-APA?

Our membership is comprised of a wide array of professionals with more than 300 job classifications performing some of the most vital supporting roles at MSU. The Administrative Professional Association (APA) has more than 2,200 members, making it the largest union group on campus.

As a professional, why do I need a union?

Everyone has a need for fair wages, quality health care and decent working conditions. MSU-APA negotiates those important issues so that they are provided fairly and consistently across campus to every APA member.

The biggest difference between a unionized workplace and a non-unionized workplace is the difference between being employed at will versus with just cause.

An at will employee has no job protections and can be disciplined up to and including discharge for no reason.

An employee with union representation is afforded just cause and due process that are contractually guaranteed and enforced which mandates discipline be based on just, equitable and reasonable actions. The University cannot be arbitrary or inconsistent in the procedures or discipline itself. Discipline should be with the desire of improving performance and correcting behavior. Therefore, a standard of progressive discipline is also a part of a unionized workplace with a verbal warning, a written warning, a suspension and then termination being the typical escalation of discipline.

What do I get for my union dues?

As an APA union member you have the right and protections of being represented by the MEA/NEA in many different ways including:

- Negotiating with the University for fair compensation, benefits, working conditions, education development, and other plans and programs.
- Participating as a member organization in the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations to pool resources, lower costs, and increase coverage to MSU employees.
- Assisting you in navigating the world of MSU support staff policies, practices, and how they align with your daily life and your contract.
- Connecting you with pertinent information regarding administrative and legislative actions that affect you and your family, your colleagues, and MSU.
- Advocating for you at every level of MSU and state and federal government.
- Defending your contractual and legal rights as a member of the APA.
- Linking you with MEA resources and programs such as MEA Financial Services and others found at www.mea.org.
- Access to professional development, experts, and resources to enhance your daily work life and experience at MSU.
- Creating communities of colleagues to educate and assist you in building a better career and connection within the MSU community.

Where do my dues go?

The majority of your dues go to support contract bargaining, advocacy and enforcement of your contract. It provides for the legal representation for each member and for the union collectively.

The local APA budget supports local member engagement activities and the governance structure of MSU-APA.

The balance of the dues is decided by a democratic process at the regional, state and national level. The Michigan Education Association (MEA) and National Education Association (NEA) are both member driven organizations with members representing their constituencies at all decision-making levels.

How do I get more information about APA?

- Go to www.msuapa.org for a copy of your contract, the most recent newsletter, and pertinent information related to your work environment.
- Call the APA office at 517-353-4898.
- Email msuapa@msu.edu if you would like to get more involved with APA.

2013 APA Annual Picnic

2013 APA Annual Picnic is scheduled for Wednesday, May 29, 2013. This member event will be held at Patriarche Park at [1100 Alton Street](#) in East Lansing from 4:30pm to 7:00pm.

Relax, network, and have fun! Food and beverages will be provided. Bring the whole family to the festivities. There will be fun activities for kids of all ages.

Please direct questions to Nick Bourland: bourlan2@msu.edu

We hope to see you there.

MEA Members Get Free and Discounted Life Insurance

It pays to plan ahead — and MEA members don't have to pay much to do just that.

Every MEA member is eligible for free life insurance through NEA Member Benefits, as well as deep discounts on group term and individual life insurance plans through MEA Financial Services.

The NEA Members Insurance Trust provides valuable, no-cost term life insurance and other important coverage to all eligible members. Members receive the following complementary benefits:

- Up to \$1,000 of term life insurance
- Up to \$5,000 of accidental death and dismemberment coverage
- \$50,000 of accidental death and dismemberment insurance for any covered accident that occurs on the job or while serving as an association leader
- \$150,000 of life insurance for unlawful homicide while on the job

For more information on the NEA Members Insurance Trust, visit www.neamb.com/duetab.

Most members will need additional life insurance on top of the free coverage offered through the NEA Members Insurance Trust, and that's where MEA Financial Services' discounted group term and individual term life insurance plans come in.

Through MEA Financial Services, members can at a low cost purchase up to \$300,000 of group term coverage to provide permanent security for their spouses and families. MEA Financial Services also offers a variety of individual term policies for members with short- to mid-term needs.

To learn more about MEA Financial Services' life insurance policies, visit <http://www.meafs.com/Insurance/LifeInsurance.cfm>.