



Building Full Capacity Locals

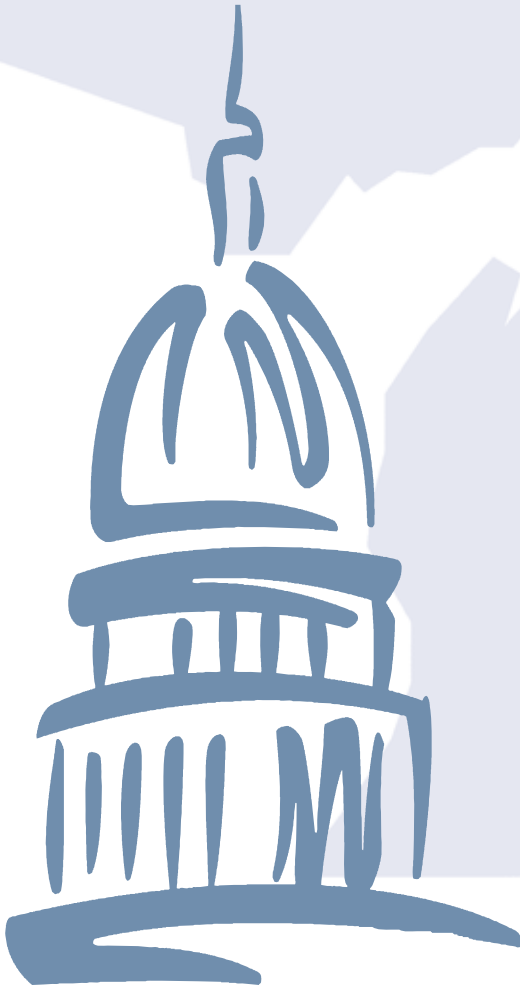
# PAC Attack

Everything you need to know to  
create a PAC-tive local association!

Proud

MEA-PAC

Activist



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Dear Local Leader,

As you know, every decision that impacts public school employees is made by an elected or appointed official. Because of this, it is very important that the members in your local association get involved and stay involved in the political process.

Full capacity locals are those in which all members are PAC-tive! That is, they are up-to-date on and actively engaged in political action at the local, state and national levels. These locals have standing political action committees and are involved in local screening and recommending committees, legislative council meetings, lobbying and yearly PAC drives. PAC-tive members guarantee that our collective voice is heard loudly and clearly on issues that are important to our members and to the future of public education.

This booklet contains everything you need to know about how to engage your members in political action, including lots of ideas and information on how to make your local PAC drive more successful and less stressful.

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# Learning the PAC “Lingo”

## **Michigan Education Association Political Action Committee (a.k.a. me-PAC or simply PAC)**

The MEA PAC is our state political action committee for MEA members. It is regulated by state campaign finance laws. It is funded solely through voluntary contributions donated by MEA members, staff and their families. MEA PAC helps support MEA's work to improve public education here in Michigan. MEA PAC works to elect pro-public education candidates for all elected offices in local and state government up and down the ballot.

## **NEA Fund for Children and Public Education (a.k.a. NEA Fund)**

NEA Fund is for short for NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. This is the federal political action committee for NEA members. It is funded solely through voluntary contributions donated by NEA members, staff and their families. The NEA Fund helps support NEA's work to improve public education. The NEA Fund also has a non-federal account that is used to support state candidates where permitted by state law. The NEA fund is regulated by the Federal Election Campaign Act.

## **Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (a.k.a. Bicra)**

The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 amended the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, which regulates the financing of political campaigns. The Act was designed to address two issues: soft money in campaign financing and the proliferation of advocacy ads.

Political money in the United States is often divided into two categories, “hard” money and “soft” money.

- **“Hard” money** is contributed directly to a candidate of a political party. It is regulated by law in both source and amount.
- **“Soft” money** refers to contributions made to political parties for purposes of party building and other activities not directly related to the election of specific candidates. “Soft money” also refers to unlimited contributions to organizations and committees other than candidate campaigns and political parties.

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## **Statewide Screening and Recommending Committee (a.k.a. Statewide S & R)**

This committee is authorized to screen and recommend to the MEA-PAC Governing Board candidates for the statewide political offices of governor and U.S. Senate and to screen and recommend candidates for the statewide political offices of attorney general, secretary of state, state board of education, major university boards, and judgeships on behalf of MEA-PAC. The committee is comprised of:

- MEA-PAC chairperson (or designee);
- MEA-PAC vice chairperson;
- Four (4) MEA-PAC Council delegates elected by the MEA-PAC Council, with no more than one (1) elected from each MEA Zone;
- A person elected by the MEA Minority Concerns Committee;
- Two (2) MEA Board of Directors members appointed by the MEA president, subject to confirmation by the MEA Board of Directors;
- The presiding officer of the MEA ESP caucus, MAHE, and MEA-Retired or designee serving ex officio, without vote;
- An MEA staff person serving as an ex officio member, without vote.

## **Local Screening and Recommending Committees (a.k.a. Local S & R)**

These are local committees composed of local MEA members (EA, ESP, Higher Ed and MEA Retired members) who contribute to MEA PAC and reside or work in the jurisdiction of the candidates running for a particular local or state office. After reviewing candidate profiles, written response to the MEA questionnaire and a formal interview, the committee makes a determination to recommend or not recommend a candidate for the contested seat. If the committee makes a recommendation, they must determine the type of recommendation: Regular, Continuing, Replacement and Favorable (primary only).

## **Legislative Council (a.k.a. leg. council)**

Legislative Councils are made up of representatives of all local associations (EA, ESP, Higher Ed and MEA-Retired chapters) located within the respective legislator's district, who are MEA-PAC contributors, registered to vote, live in and/or employed in the legislative jurisdiction and are interested in political action and legislation. Leg. Councils meet on a regular basis with their legislator(s) to discuss and share concerns on issues affecting the school community. Members on the Council, in turn, keep their local membership informed and involved in legislative

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activity; and assess their members' legislative needs and concerns and to cause the local membership to be aware of MEA's legislative agenda.

### **Recommended Candidate**

The candidate selected by the Screening and Recommending Committee in a race for office in a specific jurisdiction at the local, state or federal level for MEA membership to support, due to the candidate's support of public education.

### **MEA PAC Council (a.k.a. MEA-PAC council)**

MEA PAC Council is a statewide group whose members are from local PACs and are elected according to a formula of no less than one representative per each four thousand MEA members. The council meets at least twice per year. The purpose of the council is to stimulate and coordinate the involvement of MEA members in politics.

### **MEA Legislation Committee (a.k.a. leg. committee)**

The MEA Legislation Committee is an advisory group to the MEA Board of Directors. Members are elected by the Representative Assembly or appointed by the vice president with the consent of the MEA Board of Directors. The Leg committee meets regularly every other year to prepare and present a two-year legislative agenda (fall of even years).

### **MEA's Legislative Agenda**

MEA's Legislative Agenda is document which spells out MEA's legislative priorities. It is developed every two years by the Leg Committee. The current legislative agenda can be found at [www.mea.org/gov/pdf/legislativepriorities](http://www.mea.org/gov/pdf/legislativepriorities).

### **Lobbying**

Lobbying is the art of influencing legislation by communicating directly with legislators. For more information on this topic, see page 16.

### **Lobbyists**

Lobbyists are the people you hire to influence legislation. Or, as one political pundit has described lobbyists, "The people you hire to protect you from the people you elect!" MEA has 6 registered staff lobbyists on staff. For more information on this topic, see page 20.

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# What about political action in MY school district?

Michigan campaign law and the Revised School Code place limits on political activity and the use of equipment and facilities in public schools. It is important that you understand these limitations before you and your members engage in political activity in your district. The following are some of the most frequently asked questions about this topic:

- **Can local associations use school equipment to produce information on political candidates or ballot issues?**

The law prohibits the use of school equipment for campaigning for candidates or ballot issues. This includes the use of copy machines, computers to develop campaign materials or the use of school e-mails to send information to members about political issues or candidates. Therefore it is important that you provide MEA with a home e-mail address in order to keep informed about issues in the legislature and information on political campaigns.

- **Can local associations host a meet-the-candidates night, or a candidate forum/ debate in the school auditorium?**

It depends on school district policy. Some districts believe that they should not use tax payer money for any political activity. Others believe such activities are a public service and will allow groups to host such activities. Many districts will charge a rental fee for the use of their facilities to a group who wishes to host such an activity.

- **Can I place information about a candidate, a ballot issue, or a legislative issue in member mailboxes in their school building?**

You **cannot** place a flyer or brochure advocating a member to vote for or against a particular candidate or issue. However, if the local association has contract language that allows for the placement of association newsletters in school mailboxes as a delivery system to the membership, the newsletter can report to the membership the names of recommended candidates and the association's position on ballot issues or legislative issues.

- **Can members wear buttons to school that advocate voting for a particular candidate or issue?**

The school code states that employees cannot wear anything that may distract students from a learning environment. Many school districts have policy that prohibits employees from wearing buttons or stickers advocating a candidate, a position on a ballot issue, or any political position.

# Holding the Most Successful PAC Drive Ever!

## When planning for your yearly local PAC drive, keep the following in mind...

- Giving to PAC should make people FEEL GOOD – that they are a part of something that is making a difference.
- A PAC drive should be positive – no negative arm twisting... please.
- Having a theme for your PAC drive makes it more fun for everyone.
- Members need to be SOLD on the idea of political action – how is giving to PAC good for them?
- Though you may set a minimum contribution level, encourage members to give as much or as little as they can afford. All contributions are WELCOME and APPRECIATED.
- Tie PAC dollars to local issues that hit home with members (e.g. PAC dollars support locally endorsed school board candidates, local bond and millage elections).
- Let members know that 40% of every PAC dollar they give goes back to the coordinating council to be used by locals to support local elections/issues.
- Asking for money is hard work! Association reps. are the KEY to any successful PAC drive, and they need training, materials, encouragement and support.
- Be sure to set specific goals for your PAC drive – don't think only in terms of dollars – think also of percentage of members who contribute.
- Set a time limit for your PAC drive (2 weeks is best).
- People will give money to people who believe in causes even if they don't necessarily believe in the cause themselves.
- Member-to-member contact is the key – it's difficult to say no to someone you know and like/respect.
- Recognize the members who gave as well as everyone who worked on the PAC drive.

## And finally, remember this...

- The # 1 reason why members do not give to PAC is because THEY ARE NOT ASKED!

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# PAC Plan of Attack

A good PAC drive starts with a clear, concise PAC Plan of Attack. Use the following questions to guide you as you plan your local PAC drive for this year.

1. What are your goals for this year's PAC drive? For example, what percentage of your members would you like to contribute? How much would you like each member to contribute? If you had a PAC drive last year, you might want to take a look at the data. Your UniServ office field assistant can run you a report showing who gave last year and in what amount.
2. Who will serve as your local PAC chair?
3. What will be the role of the local president in your PAC drive?
4. What will be the role of your UniServ director in your PAC drive?
5. Will you have a PAC committee to help your PAC chairperson? Who will be on the committee?
6. What will be the involvement of the association/building representatives?
7. Will you have a theme for your PAC drive?
8. When will your PAC drive take place? How long will it last?
9. How will you generate interest and enthusiasm within your PAC committee and with association/building representatives prior to the start of your PAC drive?
10. What kind of training will those involved in your PAC drive need? Who will train them? When?
11. What materials/resources will you need to hold your PAC drive? From where will you get what you need?
12. How will you get members together to share PAC information? Who will organize this? What materials/resources will you need?
13. How will you kick off your PAC drive?
14. How will you share information and updates with members during your PAC drive?
15. What are some ways to generate member interest in your PAC drive?
16. What local issues can be used to "personalize" your PAC drive (e.g. school board election, bond issue, and millage)?
17. What will be your system for transmitting funds to MEA? NEA?

NOTE: Checks to NEA for \$50 or more must be processed by MEA and sent to NEA within 10 days from the date the check is written, and check for less than \$50 must be processed and sent to NEA within 30 days from the date the check is written.



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18. How will you recognize/thank those members who have contributed>
  19. How will you recognize/thank the association/building representatives for their work?
  20. How will you sustain member interest and enthusiasm in political action after your PAC drive ends? Remember, PAC-tive members are more likely to give to PAC!

### **PAC Giveaways (a.k.a. drawings, raffles, contests, etc.)**

Local associations can spend dues money to buy prizes for a giveaway or trinkets to award to contributors. However, there are some things you need to be aware of:

- **Fundraising Giveaway:** A “giveaway” is a drawing in which members get a chance to win a prize or prizes. In order for a drawing to qualify as a “giveaway” all members have to be able to enter the prize drawing regardless of whether or not they have made a contribution to MEA PAC or the NEA Fund. Likewise, each member, regardless of whether he or she has made a contribution, has to have the same chance of winning the giveaway prize. This means that members cannot be given more tickets to enter into the giveaway if they make a contribution or based on the amount of their contribution.
- **Fundraising Auctions:** An “auction” is an event at which members bid on a prize and the prize is awarded to the highest bidder. “Live” auctions are conducted verbally by an auctioneer and “silent” auctions are conducted by writing bids on a bid sheet. Either type of auction can be used to raise contributions for PAC provided that participation in the auction is open only to MEA/NEA members, staff and their families.
- **Raffles:** Raffles or lotteries may not be used to raise contributions for MEA PAC or the NEA Fund. A “raffle” is a contest in which a prize is awarded in whole or in part by chance and for which an entry fee is charged. A drawing which is only open to members and staff who make a contribution to the MEA PAC or the NEA Fund is a raffle. Raffles are regulated by state and federal lottery laws and are illegal in many states. MEA PAC and the NEA Fund may not accept any contribution that is raised through a fundraising raffle.

### **Start thinking about next year... this year!**

In order to maintain continuity and alleviate having to “reinvent the wheel” every year, you should keep your PAC drive plan along with any materials you create and an accurate record of members who contributed and amounts contributed in a file for use next year. You might want to include some de-briefing notes containing comments from your volunteers, things you would do differently, things that worked well, etc.

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# A few quick, simple PAC ideas that work . . .

The most successful PAC drives are simple, fun and easy. You'll need to publicize them, talk them up and get people enthusiastic about participating.

## **PAC the Lounge (or bus garages, staff meeting room, break room, etc.)**

Locals across the state have had huge success with this one!

Treat your members to lunch (or breakfast) and a very short PAC presentation which highlights how PAC money has helped in your district/college, etc. in terms of getting board members or trustees elected, bond issues passed, bad legislation stopped etc. At the end of the presentation, indicate that there is no charge for lunch ("It's on the union"), but encourage people to put the money they would have spent on lunch that day into a PAC envelope instead.

## **PAC on the Pounds with a Candy "Bar"** (Grass Lake EA)

Set up a candy (bar) buffet containing a variety of wrapped candy.

Give each member a small brown bag containing a PAC envelope. Talk about the importance of PAC for a few minutes and answer questions. Then, for a PAC contribution, let them fill their bags with candy to get them through the week.

## **PAC Pays!** (Waterford ESP)

Trade PAC contributions for \$100,000 candy bars – "A five dollar investment in your future will earn you \$100,000!" "It always pays to give to PAC." Provide handouts or send e-mail messages identifying the ways PAC dollars have "paid off" for members.

## **PAC Cookbook -- Stirring Up FUNds!** (Novi EA)

Create a local association cookbook full of recipes contributed by your members. MEA can help you put this together. "Sell" cookbooks for PAC contributions.

## **Making the PAC Connection**

Help members see first-hand the impact that their PAC dollars have.

Hold an after-work PAC get-together and invite a school board member or legislator who received PAC support in a recent campaign to talk about how important those contributions were and how they helped him/her get elected.

## **PAC Photo Op**

Who wouldn't want their photo taken with a movie star or famous politician?

Order a life size celebrity cardboard cutout and offer members the opportunity to have their photo taken with it for a \$5 or 10 PAC contribution.

Web search: "life size cardboard cutout"

# It pays to give to PAC !

## MEA's 2010-11 PAC Incentive Program

Awards and incentives will be provided based on the **highest average contribution per member** and the **highest percentage of members making PAC contributions**. The competition will be between ZONES.

### ***Highest Average/Member Contribution to MEA-PAC***

1. **\$6,000** will be awarded to the zone with the highest average/member contribution.
2. **\$3,000** will be awarded to the zone with the 2nd highest average/member contribution.
3. **\$1,000** will be awarded to the zone with the 3rd highest average/member contribution.

### ***Highest Percentage of Members Contributing to MEA-PAC***

1. **\$6,000** will be awarded to the zone with the highest percentage of members giving to MEA-PAC.
2. **\$3,000** will be awarded to the zone with the 2nd highest percentage of members giving to MEA-PAC.
3. **\$1,000** will be awarded to the zone with the 3rd highest percentage of members giving to MEA-PAC.

### ***Highest Average/Member Contribution to the NEA Fund***

1. **\$2,500** will be awarded to the zone with the highest average/member contribution to the NEA Fund.

### ***Highest Percentage of Members Contributing to the NEA Fund***

1. **\$2,500** will be awarded to the zone with the highest percentage of members contributing to the NEA Fund. Zones that win these awards will be required to use the funds to enhance future PAC campaigns. Local leaders and their UniServ directors will work together with their Zone Director to determine how the money will be utilized. (Award money can be used to provide incentives for local PAC drives, scholarships to attend the Bargaining/PAC/ PR conference, incentives for members directing PAC drives, etc.)

## **MEA Government Affairs will also continue to provide the following incentives:**

- Scholarships to the Bargaining/PAC/PR Conference for every local in which 70% of its membership contributes the suggested minimum of \$25 to MEA PAC and \$15 to the NEA Fund.
- MEA Retired Superstar Award
- MEA Retired Chapter Superstar Award
- Web Winners

# It's the Law!

That there are strict federal laws and rules that apply to the collection of PAC dollars.

## **Make sure that everyone who works on your local PAC drive is aware of the following:**

- Every PAC contribution must be attributable to someone—regardless of how small the contribution is. A name must be attached to every dollar!
- PAC contributions cannot be accepted unless they are enclosed in a completed PAC envelope. Check, credit cards or cash (up to \$20 for MEA-PAC and \$100 for NEA Fund per person or event) are all happily accepted.
- PAC contributions must be sent in weekly. Timeliness is a major issue under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (. Contributions over \$50 must be remitted to MEA within 10 days. Contributions of under \$50 must be remitted within 30 days.
- MEA will provide postage-paid envelopes in which to submit your PAC contributions. You can get these from your UniServ office or by contacting Linda Myers, MEA Campaign Consultant.
- Keep a record of all members who contribute to PAC.
- Only MEA/NEA members, staff and their families can contribute to MEA PAC and the NEA Fund.

## **A few words about payroll deduction:**

- Before moving ahead with payroll deduction, be sure to consult with our school district administration to ensure they will do payroll deduction.
- PAC payroll deduction payments must be sent in a separate check from dues payments. Contributions cannot be accepted if both are sent as one check because, by law, dues money and PAC dollars cannot be co-mingled.
- We suggest that contributions made by payroll deduction be for at least \$40. It is simply not cost effective to process anything less than this.
- Contributions made by payroll deduction may only be made at the local level and must be accompanied by a fully completed PAC form (no PAC envelope).
- In order to comply with the law, you will need to provide detailed information along with the payroll deduction check that is sent in. This information needs to include each contributor's name, amount contributed and how much is to be directed to the NEA Fund and how much to MEA-PAC. You can get this information from the payroll office in your district.

## **Making PAC contributions on-line**

Internet Fundraising: Members can contribute to MEA PAC and the NEA Fund on the web. The web address for making a contribution by credit card is **[www.meavotes.org](http://www.meavotes.org)**. Click on contribute and follow directions for making the contribution. The NEA's web address for making contributions to the NEA Fund is **[www.neafund.org](http://www.neafund.org)**.

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## Why do I need to give to PAC?

The following information will help you answer this question.

### **Federal campaign finance laws do not allow for dues money to be used for PAC.**

The law also prohibits the mingling of dues dollars with PAC dollars, which is why PAC money must be contributed separately.

### **What about the recent Supreme Court decision?**

In *Citizens United v Federal Elections Commission*, the United States Supreme Court decided that corporations and labor unions have a constitutional right under the First Amendment to communicate to the public their views on candidates for public office. Therefore, the Supreme Court struck down federal and state campaign laws that prohibited corporations and labor unions from using their own funds to communicate their views to the public on candidates for public office. The Supreme Court did not disturb, however, other portions of federal and state campaign laws that prohibit corporations and labor unions from contributing their own funds to the campaign of a candidate for public office and that require public disclosure of all funds spent by unions and corporations on elections. Accordingly, neither a corporation nor a labor union may lawfully contribute to the campaign of a candidate for public office.

While the Supreme Court decision allows corporations and unions to pay for advertising in support of or in opposition to a candidate, this must be done without any coordination with a candidate's campaign. There may not be any discussion or other communication with a candidate regarding the content of the advertisement. PACs continue to play a vital role in supporting candidates for public election, because voluntary contributions by the members of a labor union to a PAC remain the only way that the union may directly contribute to a candidate's campaign. Only through PAC contributions may a candidate use the funds to directly support his or her campaign.

### **MEA-PAC money is spent only on recommended candidates.**

Recommendations come from local, regional and statewide member screening and recommending committees and the MEA-PAC Council. In short, candidates are chosen by members just like you! PAC money is also given to both the Republican and Democratic House and Senate caucuses. Candidates receive support based SOLELY on their positions on issues pertaining to public education and public school employees. See page 15 in this booklet for more information on the Screening and Recommending process.

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## **It's important to give to both MEA-PAC and the NEA Fund.**

Contributions to MEA PAC may only be used to support candidates running for state and local office. They may not be used to support federal candidates which include Michigan's two U.S. senators and 15 Representatives. Therefore, it is important to give to both MEA-PAC and the NEA Fund if you want to impact both state and federal elections.

## **MEA returns 40 percent of the MEA PAC money collected in your local.**

40 percent of all MEA-PAC money collected is returned to your local coordinating council to support candidates in local races (e.g. school board, city council, judges) or for millage and bond elections. To find out how to access this money for a local election, you need to contact the chairperson of your coordinating council or your UniServ director.

## **Independent PACs (like MEA PAC) are limited in the amount of money they can give to candidates.**

For each statewide candidate in a statewide race (e.g. governor, supreme court justices, secretary of state, attorney general, college/university trustees), MEA-PAC can give up to \$34,000. For state Senate candidates the amount is limited to \$10,000 per candidate and for state House candidates, \$5,000. This starts to add up when you realize that there are 38 Senate seats and 110 House seats as well as numerous other statewide races!

## **MEA spent approximately \$1,500,000 in the November, 2008 election.**

This money included direct contributions to MEA recommended candidates and State House caucuses and polling. The NEA Fund provided over \$1,000,000 for the Presidential and Congressional campaigns.

## **The 2010 election is going to be expensive.**

This election will be more expensive than 2008 due to the fact that there are more positions up for election. Such positions range from U.S. Senate, U.S. Congress, Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Senate, State House and all the education boards. WE are also expecting to engage in opposition/support of possible initiatives or ballot issues.

## **PAC contributions to candidates continue to pay big dividends**

Even in these tough times, PAC contributions still pay big dividends. When our recommended candidates win, we win. They open their doors to our lobbyists and seriously consider our positions on issues such as health care benefits, retirement benefits, right to bargain, job protection and professional quality issues. These candidates are usually willing to assist us in advancing or sponsoring bills and stopping bad, short-sighted legislation that can hurt

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children and public school employees. For example, MEA supported candidate, Representative Fred Miller, introduced and sponsored HB 4533 which called for removing the prohibition against bargaining over outsourcing/privatization.

**Times are tough, but without PAC dollars, they can get worse.**

Despite what members may be feeling, without the political power that PAC money ensures things CAN get worse. For example, your PAC dollars are at work every day as we work with legislators on issues affecting MEA members. In the current session, the lobbyists are working to retain bargaining rights and to keep health benefits as an issue to bargain at the local level; coalescing with other public employee unions to develop a fair early retirement incentive; working to stop privatization of public school employee jobs; etc.

Another example of your PAC dollars working on your behalf was the recommendation and election of Representative Jennifer Haase, an elementary teacher from Macomb County. Rep. Haase was appointed to the House Education Committee, where she speaks on your behalf and advocates for school employees every day.

Lobbyists are working with our friends in legislature each day. This year has been a year with huge issues each and every day that the legislature is in session. With members' help, the ability to bargain health benefits has been maintained, and school reforms protected members' rights.

# The MEA Screening and Recommending Process\*

The candidate screening and recommending process followed by MEA PAC is one of the more sophisticated grassroots procedures of any PAC in the nation. The MEA PAC Screening and Recommending process (S & R) involves more than 2,000 members from across the state in back-home interviews and S & R meetings. Our procedures have been replicated by both private and public sector PACs.

It is natural for members who serve on Legislative councils to serve on an S & R committee. Since they have been involved in discussions with policy makers on current issues, they are able and prepared to ask the tough questions of candidates.

Below are some basics about the S & R process. To learn more, request a copy of the MEA's Candidate Screening and Recommending Handbook.

- Each coordinating council that is wholly or partially within a legislative district is entitled to participate on an equal basis in the S & R process.
- Any local association wholly or partially within a legislative district is eligible for membership on the S & R committee.
- MEA S & R committees are composed of EA, ESP, Higher Ed and MEA-Retired members.
- All S & R committee members must be contributors to MEA PAC.
- A member who is involved in the campaign of a candidate may not serve on the S & R committee considering that candidate's recommendation.
- MEA provides intensive training for all members interested in serving on S & R committees.
- When making recommendations, S & R committees consider the following:
  1. Demographics of the district
  2. Voting record (if candidate is an incumbent)
  3. Win ability
  4. Campaign organization (finances, structure, volunteers, etc.)
  5. Accessibility to MEA members/staff during time in office (if an incumbent)
  6. Assessment and input from MEA lobbyists
  7. Polling results (if there are any)
  8. Local association involvement and support of candidate
- After a recommendation is made, the S & R committee needs to stay involved by getting candidate volunteers, working with campaign staff, getting out the vote and working closely with other S & R committees in your geographic area.

**If you are interested in getting involved in the S & R process, you should contact your local UniServ Director and/or your local PAC chairperson.**

\*MEA encourages use of the S & R process for all local, state and federal elections.



# Talk is NOT Cheap!

It is very important that we make legislators aware of our views/positions on legislation which affects public schools and public school employees- whether we support or oppose it, what information we have which might be helpful to them, how students/employees may be affected, etc.

Personal lobbying is a very effective way to reach legislators, and lobbying as part of a group is an even more effective way of reaching them. A group is far more visible, has greater resources and carries more political weight.

The most effective lobbying efforts are those where the people doing the lobbying have had informal/social contacts with legislators prior to making specific legislative requests. Relationship building with legislators and other policy makers should begin as early into the election cycle as possible and be maintained throughout a person's time in office. Lobbying efforts are greatly enhanced when those doing the lobbying are known, trusted, respected and liked.

## **Prior to doing any lobbying, it is important to:**

- Be prepared. Do your homework on the bill or issue of concern to you.
- Know when and where to contact legislators. They are usually in Lansing on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays because that is when the House and Senate are in session.
- Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe is the right approach.
- Be clear and use facts to support your position.
- Be as brief as possible and use your time wisely. Stick to the issue(s) you came to discuss.
- Disagree, but don't be disagreeable. A calm, reasonable attitude and a set of well-prepared facts and reasons for your position may change a legislator's mind on an issue.
- Listen without interrupting. Legislators may have input or information from other groups of which you may not be aware.

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## Lobbying by Letter

A personal post card, letter or e-mail is also an effective way of making contact with your legislators whether in Lansing or Washington. For many members, letter writing may be easier and less intimidating than face-to-face lobbying. The “power of the pen” should never be underestimated. Sometimes just one letter, with a new perspective or with a clear-cut persuasive argument can be the decisive factor in a legislator’s action.

A few letter writing tips:

- Use the proper form of address. Know your legislator’s full name and its correct spelling. Use title and last name in the salutation, e.g. Dear Senator Smith or Dear Representative Jones.
- The best communications are those written in your OWN words. Avoid form letters or e-mails if at all possible.
- Time the arrival of your communication. The best time to address a bill is when it is still in committee.
- Know what you are writing about and identify the specific bill or issue of concern to you by its popular title or bill number.
- Be brief, concise and avoid rambling.

# How does a bill become a law?

Because your high school civics class may have been a while ago, here's a quick version of how bills become laws in Michigan.

A bill is what a piece of legislation is called BEFORE it is enacted into law. A bill can be introduced in either the House or Senate. Hundreds of bills are introduced every year in the state legislature, but very few ever become law. **Keep reading and you'll understand why!**

1. Once a bill is introduced, it is referred to the appropriate standing committee.
2. In committee, the bill is discussed, debated, amended, etc. Sometimes public hearings are held and testimony is taken. Not every bill sent to committee will be considered. Committees can choose to report the bill with or without a recommendation, add amendments, offer a substitute bill, take no action or refuse to report a bill out.
3. If a bill is reported out favorably or a substitute bill is offered, the bill goes back to the House and Senate (a.k.a. houses) where it is discussed and amendments can be made. Then the bill can be voted upon or it is stalled by being referred back to committee, postponed or tabled.
4. If the bill passes, it goes to the other house where the same procedure is followed. If the bill is passed in the SAME form in both houses, it goes to the governor for signature.
5. If the bill is passed in a different form by the second house, it is returned to the house of origin. If that house accepts the changes, the bill is "enrolled" and sent to the Governor for signature. If changes are rejected, the bill goes to a conference committee (made up of members of both houses) which tries to resolve the differences. If the first conference committee report is rejected, a second committee may be appointed.
6. The Governor has 14 days after receiving a bill to consider it. He/she can sign the bill into law, veto the bill or do neither. If the Governor neither signs nor vetos it, the bill becomes a law 14 days after reaching the Governor's desk unless the legislature adjourns sine die (at the end of the year) within the 14 day period. In that case the bill does not become a law.
7. If the Governor vetoes a bill while the legislature is in session, the legislature may override the veto by a 2/3 vote in both houses.

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# Running for Office – Why not YOU?

*WE are the ones we have been waiting for.*

*--From the Hopi Poem, "the Great River"*

To ensure that public policy decisions are made by elected officials who understand the concept of public service, the importance of public education and the needs of public school employees, more MEA members need to run for elected office. There's no better way to achieve the goal of securing adequate, equitable, stable funding for public schools than to have MEA members in policy making positions at the local and state levels – from school boards, to city councils, to the state House and Senate.

If you're interested in exploring the possibility of running for public office, you should contact Linda Myers, MEA Campaign Consultant (lmyers@mea.org; 800-292-1934) for assistance.

In addition, you may want to check out the following Web sites:

[www.democracyforamerica.com](http://www.democracyforamerica.com)

<http://www.ippsr.msu.edu/mplp>

[www.progressivemajority.org](http://www.progressivemajority.org)

<http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org>

## **Elections and your local association...**

Your local association needs to be involved in local school board elections and also in local bond/millage elections. It is recommended that you make every effort to engage all of the unions in your school district/community in these elections—there is strength in numbers!

For materials, information and help accessing MEA PAC funds that can be used, contact Linda Myers, MEA Campaign Consultant, your local UniServ director and/or your coordinating council chair.

Three MEA publications which may be helpful are, "Electing Your Employer" and "Michigan School Millage and Bond Issues Election Handbook" and "United We Stand – Coalition Building for EA and ESP Locals."

# On the frontlines...

## MEA's Lobbyists

The MEA has six registered staff lobbyists working on your behalf. Together, they have a total of 89 years of lobbying experience! The job of a lobbyist includes meeting with each state legislator on a daily basis to inform them of MEA's positions on current legislation; attending and testifying at standing committee meetings; working with committees and legislators in developing bills on MEA's behalf; and attending legislative fundraisers. Further, each MEA lobbyist works within his/her assigned geographic area by arranging for and attending Legislative Councils in legislators' home districts; working with UniServ directors to set up S & R's in state house and senate races; and providing updates on legislation and reporting to Coordinating Councils, PAC Councils, and Zone Staff meetings. A new responsibility this year was to host back home lobby days across the state.

Here are each staff lobbyist's geographic and committee assignments:

Lobbyist	Geographic Area	Lobbying and Other Assignments
<p><b>David Michelson</b> dmichelson@mea.org Ext. 6210</p>	<p>Central/Northern Zones</p>	<p><b>Senate Committees:</b> Education</p> <p><b>Subcommittees on Appropriations:</b> Community Colleges Higher Education</p> <p><b>House Committees:</b> Education</p> <p><b>Subcommittees on Appropriations:</b> Community Colleges Higher Education</p> <p><b>State Board of Education</b> <b>MAHE Board</b> <b>Republican Educators Caucus</b></p>
<p><b>Don Noble</b> dnoble@mea.org Ext. 5537</p>	<p>Southern/Central Zones</p>	<p><b>Senate Committees:</b> Finance Appropriations Health Policy</p> <p><b>House Committees:</b> Appropriations Health Policy Insurance Tax Policy</p>

<p><b>Joyce Phelps</b> jphelps@mea.org Ext. 4008</p>	<p>Wayne/Monroe/ Washtenaw</p>	<p><b>Senate Committees:</b> Education Judiciary <b>House Committees:</b> Education New Economy and Quality of Life <b>Detroit Legislators</b> <b>ESP Caucus</b></p>
<p><b>Dave Stafford</b> dstafford@mea.org Ext. 543</p>	<p>Eastern/Central Zone</p>	<p><b>Senate Committees:</b> Campaign &amp; Election Oversight Commerce and Tourism <b>House Committees:</b> Ethics and Elections Government Operations Labor <b>Legislative Communications</b></p>
<p><b>Chuck Agerstrand</b> cagerstrand@mea.org Ext. 5462</p>	<p>Retirement Consultant</p>	<p><b>Senate Committees:</b> Senior Citizens &amp; Veterans Affairs <b>Subcommittee on Appropriations:</b> Retirement <b>House Committees :</b> Senior Health, Security &amp; Retirement <b>MPSERS Board</b> <b>MEA-Retired Staff Liaison</b></p>
<p><b>Linda Myers</b> lmyers@mea.org Ext. 5549</p>	<p>Campaign Consultant</p>	<p><b>Campaigns &amp; Elections</b> <b>Democratic Educators Caucus Liaison</b> <b>PAC</b></p>

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## Keeping Current

To receive the most up-to-date, accurate information on the political scene and what is going on in the legislature, you and your members can subscribe to MEA's political e-mail newsletters – Capital Chaos and MEA Votes. Not only do these newsletters contain the latest political, legislative and election information, but they also serve to alert members when specific action is necessary and what form that action should take.

All you need to do to subscribe is:

Send an email to **webmaster@meavotes.org** with your home email address and request to receive **MEA Votes**.

Send an email to **lmyers@mea.org** with your home email address and request to receive **Capitol Chaos**.

***School e-mail addresses cannot be used, so be sure to provide a home/personal e-mail address.***

# MEA

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## Michigan Education Association

P.O. Box 2573, East Lansing, MI 48826-2573

517-332-6551 or 800-292-1934

[www.mea.org](http://www.mea.org)

Iris K. Salters, President • Steven B. Cook, Vice President • Peggy McLellan, Secretary-Treasurer • Lu Battaglieri, Executive Director

*The mission of the MEA is to ensure that the education of our students and  
the working environments of our members are of the highest quality.*

2010 Govt Affairs

