

Pension Attack: What Is The MEA Doing? And What You Should Do.

October 7, 2016

In the past few weeks, rumors have been confirmed that [an attack on our pensions](#) is being planned for this fall. The form of this attack is likely to be an attempt to remove new school employees from the pension system, which will cause the system's under-funding to skyrocket, leading to its inevitable failure.

The attack on MPSERS is expected to occur in the next legislative lame duck session. This is the period after an election and before the new legislature is seated in January, a time period when a significant number of legislators are still in power even though they have been term-limited or were just defeated at the polls. Lame duck sessions are marked by threats and deal-making by the party in power during late-night sessions with a deadline looming. The 2012 Right to Work bill was forced through during such a lame duck session.

What Is The MEA Doing?

MEA staff has raised awareness of this and other attacks through in-person presentations across the state, in schools, field offices and conferences, to both active members and retirees.

MEA lobbyists spent the summer meeting with Republican legislators to track down these rumors and to educate them on the facts about MPSERS. The only legislators who knew these "reforms" were being planned were in a very small group of Republican leaders and [DeVos legislators](#). This information void represented an opportunity to influence other Republican legislators.

MEA is also working with a coalition to oppose the legislation that includes labor and school management as well as local government groups who are also under attack, and is beginning a program to connect member constituents with Republican legislators it identifies as persuadable on this issue. (More on this program below.)

MEA is preparing for lame duck but can only succeed if the groundwork is in place. This is a political attack. It calls for a political response.

Convincing persuadable legislators often requires focusing their attention on how their voting constituents feel. Which is where MEA members come in...

What Should You Do?

Stay Informed

[Track](#) MEAMatters.com, 'like' it on [Facebook](#) and follow it on [Twitter](#).

[Subscribe](#) to Capitol Comments, the MEA Communications e-newsletter that gives on-the-fly updates of legislative action. Updates are written literally as the legislative action occurs by MEA lobbyists in the Capitol. There is no better or more immediate source for what is happening in the legislature.

At some point, an MEA lobbyist will issue a call for help through Capitol Comments, which will include an issue update and suggested language. You can email legislator offices, write letters to newspapers, and even text legislators during session.

Legislators actually count calls for and against every issue: their livelihood literally depends on how their constituents react to the job they do. Engaging them on matters you care deeply about can have a major effect: MEA email storms are well-known in the House and Senate.

Spread the Word

Talk to your colleagues and take a firm stand. Print [Who's \(Really\) Your Buddy](#) and ask your coworkers whether their candidate is really looking out for their future. If you operate a local association blog or website, re-post MEAMatters articles. Use material from MEAMatters in your newsletters (no need to ask for permission). Download PDF versions of the articles (available on most pages) and hand them out. Get active.

Engage the Media

MEA members are uniquely qualified to discuss what is really going on in public schools, as opposed to a 'scholar' in a Midland think tank who hasn't been in a public school since he [gave up substitute teaching](#).

When you read a softball reference from the Mackinac Center in a newspaper, or one that quotes its statistics promising the failure of MPERS, write a respectful email to the reporter and suggest he or she

look into who funds the Mackinac Center and how that drives their policy solutions, including its long-term campaign to kill off pensions.

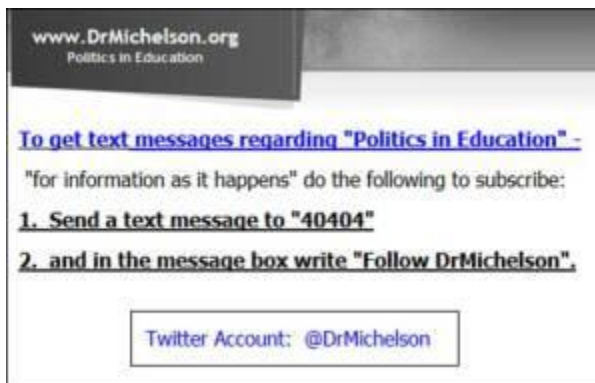


Post responses to the internet versions of these stories. Don't let a "we don't have pensions so why should teachers?" comment go unchallenged.

Material for these responses can be had by using the search box on any page of MEAMatters. Just type in the subject of the article and flip through the articles that mention the issue. Updated messaging points on the pension attack will be available in the coming weeks through Capitol Comments and MEAMatters.

Track Legislation

Follow the legislature with MEA's [Bill Tracker](#) and MEA lobbyist Dr. Dave Michelson's Twitter account. The Bill Tracker gives current status of significant legislation affecting public schools and whether MEA supports it. Dr. Michelson's updates are followed by legislators on both sides of the aisle and give up-to-the-minute updates on legislative action.



Engage the Legislature

Members and retirees who live in a district with a Republican Representative or Senator are in a special place in this debate. They need to reach out and have an informative conversation with these legislators and ask them their position on MPSERS reform. MEA will issue a short MPSERS information sheet for reference within days. Coffee hours held in

the legislative district and office hours in district offices are particularly good opportunities for these conversations. Check the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Republican websites for times and places.



Contact chcanfield@MEA.org to report back on what your learned.

Vote

After his first campaign, Rick Snyder received 40% of MEA member's votes. When he ran for reelection, he got just 20%. When MEA members learn who supports them and who doesn't, they vote accordingly, so don't hesitate to spread the word. Download [Who's \(Really\) Your Buddy](#) and show it to your colleagues. Make the case that the survival of the MEA is [directly related](#) to the survival of public schools.

Give to PAC in your building. The sorry fact is that money talks in politics. But even relatively small contributions add up in an organization with 120,000 members.

We'll never outspend our opponents but we have strength in numbers (which is why we've under attack). So volunteer for a campaign, knock doors, stuff envelopes.

If you're not registered to vote, get registered. Follow the link at the bottom of this page.

And vote like your future depends on it. Because it does.