

Royal Oak Education Association

Reporter

February, 2008

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POLITICS R US

As the Michigan legislature tussled this past year to create a viable state budget, educational funding was tossed to and fro like the political football that it has become. The MEA, through our Political Action Committee (PAC), continued to fight for stable funding



Representative Marie Donigan

for education. Of course, we had our legislative supporters; beyond that, however, we had our staunch allies. Count Royal Oak Representative Marie Donigan as a staunch ally of teachers and public education. During the legislative battles of September, and into the early hours of October 1st when Michigan shut down for a few hours, Marie steadfastly supported an income and sales tax structure that bolstered public school funds. Next, when legislators who favored cuts in education rather than a tax increase to support education offered to agree to the increases at the expense of school employees, some MEA supported legislators agreed to make the budget compromise on our backs. Not Donigan, however. Marie refused to vote for proposals that weakened our ability to bargain for MESSA or eroded retirement benefits for future teachers.

As a result of standing by her principles and supporting students and teachers, Marie is now the target of a recall campaign. The recall petition was recently certified by a 2-1 vote of the Oakland Count Election Commission. The reason for the recall has nothing to do with Marie's ethics or any allegations of wrongdoing. The petition states that the attempted recall is merely because Marie voted to support education (and other public services) by her vote for the tax increase.

Marie stood up for us; we now need to stand up for her. Our first job is to collect as much money as possible to support the costs of a court challenge to the recall. Please make your check payable to:

Committee to Elect Marie Donigan.

Give the check to your Association Rep or send it to me at the ROEA via interoffice mail. We are also seeking financial support for Marie through MEA-PAC, but individual contributions-no matter how small-are essential.

Your gift doesn't only help Marie. It helps to secure stable funding for Michigan's students and fair health and retirement benefits for Michigan's teachers.

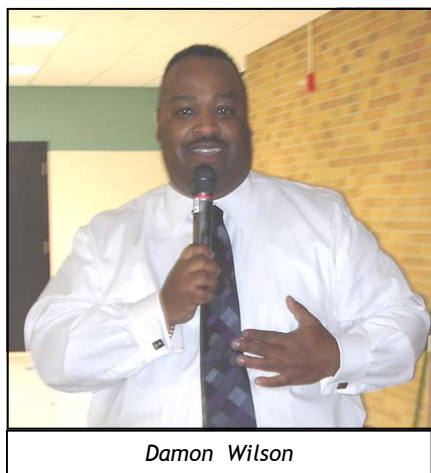
Thank you for your support.

Sid

An Eventful Past Month...

We had two very successful ROEA events in January.

On January 15th, Damon Wilson from Michigan Education Association Financial Services gave a presentation on our retirement program. Damon's presentations are always informative and entertaining. Over 100 members from our three MEA locals were in attendance. Thanks are due to Laurie Moore, our MEA Uniserve Director, for arranging the retirement seminar.



Damon Wilson



Attentive Audience

On January 17th, we held our annual mid year party. This year's party was at Bailey's Pub in Troy. About 80 of our members enjoyed excellent food, beverages, billiards, and the company of colleagues and friends. Barbara Pollis and Chris Baer did a yeoman's job planning and arranging the party. They were capably assisted by Betty Ann Garlak.

And, the Professional Learning Community committee finalized its work. This committee was a product of last year's bargaining and was initiated because of the ROEA/Administrative gridlock over PLCs at the bargaining table. We were well represented by elementary teachers Jim Gordon and Mary Kosnik, middle school teachers Barbara Pollis and Debbie Taylor, and high school teachers Alec Snyder and Neal Drilich. The results of the committees work will be shared with the union and administration when bargaining begins again this spring. Much appreciation to Jim, Mary, Barbara, Debbie, Alec, and Neal for their time and work.

Looking Ahead...

As you may know we have a contract re-opener for the 2008-09 year. During the re-opener our current contract remains operational as the contract does not expire until August 28th, 2009. For the re-opener, we are confined to bargaining wages, benefits, and calendar for the 2008-09

school year. Other subjects for bargaining can be discussed by mutual consent of the parties, but the re-opener defines the basic structure of our bargaining. In order to prepare for bargaining, we always survey our members. At this point, a few members have volunteered for the survey committee and they will soon begin their work.

In order to better prepare for bargaining, several of our members will be attending the MEA bargaining conference at Cobo Hall in early February. The MEA runs a great conference covering the gamut of bargaining concerns including labor laws, financial presentations, and how to work well with parents and citizens during bargaining.

As a member of the NEA Resolutions committee, I will be spending a few days in Washington D.C. over the winter break. Resolutions are the belief statements that guide our union and cover about anything that you can think of from teaching practices to wages and benefits to political/philosophical values. The committee consists of 200 of us representing all 50 states (Michigan has 7 delegates). We review belief statements submitted by members, edit them for clarity (imagine 200 teachers arguing over the proper placement of a comma to enhance the clarity of a statement; these arguments sometimes last

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longer than whether what the statement says mirrors our beliefs as an organization), and make recommendations regarding the approval of belief statements to the thousands of delegates who will attend the NEA Representative Assembly in the summer. As an example of some of the arcana that we indulge in, 199 of the committee members probably would not like my previous sentence and would spend considerable time arguing that it's too long, should be broken into several sentences rather than using parentheses, and really doesn't adequately express what the resolutions committee does anyway.

While in Washington I will also be meeting with Congressman Sander Levin's education aide to say that No Child Left Behind is an unfair law that is damaging public education. Royal Oak High School, for example, has not met Annual Yearly Progress goals this year because as a subgroup our special education students did not do well on the MEAP. This, of course, is to be expected. By definition students are certified as having a disability because of various handicapping conditions that interfere with their ability to do well on standardized tests. Punishing school districts for something that students can't possibly

achieve is a planned and systematic attack on public schools and public school teachers. (If NCLB is changed on February 22nd, I'll take full credit as my meeting with Levin's aide is on the 21st.)

Finally, we will have two guest teachers from Detroit at our Representative Assembly on February 26th. Steve Conn and Heather Miller are Detroit teachers who have been placed on administrative leave by the Detroit School Board. (Administrative leave is an action which is a precursor to possible discharge of teachers.) The unstated reason for the Board's actions is that Heather and Steve effectively organized the community and their union, the Detroit Federation of Teachers, to oppose the Detroit School Board's plans for massive school closings in Detroit. (The School Board trumped up vague charges against them which have not been investigated by the Board for the last seven months.) Steve and Heather, who are married, and the DFT have filed charges against the Detroit School Board. Their presentation will give us great insight into advocacy for students and free speech rights for teachers as union members.

2008-09 Calendar

The legislature has given the county intermediate school districts the authority to set the times for the traditional Christmas and Easter breaks. For the 2008-09 academic year Christmas break will be the two week period from Monday, December 22nd through Friday, January 2nd. The spring break will be from Monday, April 6th through Friday, April 10th. Good Friday is April 10th in 2009, so Good Friday will fall within the spring break.

We still have plenty of bargaining to do, even given the county calendar. February break, the number of days in the year, professional development days and professional

learning community time remain subject to local collective bargaining.

Pinnacle Problems?

We talk about Pinnacle issues all the time at Joint Committee. The ROEA continually makes the point that we have not had adequate training on Pinnacle. The Administration's response has been that Kevin Kurkowski is always available for individual advice and assistance. If you have any Pinnacle issues, you can contact Kevin at the Board office, 248/435-8400, extension 242.

Good Stuff

Donna Moceri, 6th grade English teacher at Royal Middle School, and her husband Joe welcomed a new family member on October 30th. Megan Chan Ah Moceri was born in Korea on April 6th, 2005. Megan was in need of a permanent and loving home and found one with Donna, Joe, and 5 ½ year old big brother AJ. Megan is a typical 2 ½ year old toddler who is playful, strong-willed, and independent. Donna says that she is a tomboy and princess rolled up into one!

Joe is a teacher in the Troy district. In his spare time he pickets in support of Royal Oak teachers. Donna spent a few months of quality time with Megan before returning to work in January.

Classified

All of the people who advertise in the Reporter are connected to the ROEA, ROESA or ROESPA. They are either members of the union, spouses of members, or retirees. You can expect a high quality of service and commitment to the needs of fellow union members as a result. Classified ads are also posted on our web site, ROEAonline.org.

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