



# Reporter

October, 2009

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## **Uniserv Director**

Laurie Moore

## THANKS TO YOU

September was a good month for Michigan's students. That's because many of you wrote or called your state representatives and beseeched them to not pass a budget that cut school funds. Some of you may have gone a little further and suggested that it was time to raise state revenue by closing existing tax loop holes or raising new taxes. I know I did. The need to raise taxes to support public education and other vital services is becoming painfully obvious. As citizens, we are beginning to understand that tax cuts such as Proposal A which saves middle class families a few dollars and wealthier individuals a whole lot of dollars, are not in our best interests as class sized burgeon, libraries and parks are closed, and police and fire protection is downsized. Wages and benefits are cut as well. These loses in our quality of life are hard to recapture once they are gone.

Some believe that we are the helpless victims of a financial crisis called "recession". I don't believe that any more than I don't believe that our

employer can't commit to a pay raise and fair benefit package as they sit on more than six million dollars in fund equity, a few unsold properties, and an increase in district enrollment.

Economist Richard Levin said at an MEA conference that a turtle on a fencepost didn't just get there, someone had to put it there. And so it is with the recession - tax policies that favor corporations and very wealthy individuals put us on this fence post called recession and it can be undone.

Thanks for working towards a fairer tax policy for middle class Michigan families and thanks for working hand in hand with our bargaining team. Every call to a state rep saying, "stop the cuts" strengthened us at the table.

That's why I believe it was a good September. Now let's work towards a good October as well.

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Royal Oak Education Association

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## CONTRACT FEATURE

### PAID LEAVE

Paid leave, usually referred to as sick leave, includes different categories of use. All bargaining unit members receive 11 days of paid leave at the beginning of the year. Unused days are carried forward to the next year. For example, if you use 5 paid leave days this year, you will begin the 2010-11 year with 17 days - 6 days carried forward plus a new allotment of 11 days.

Paid leave days can be used for various reasons. The primary use is for your own illness or illness of an immediate family member. There is no contractual limit on the use of accumulated paid leave for your own illness. For the illness of an immediate family member, you can use up to 60 days from your accumulated paid leave. There is a contract provision to possibly extend beyond 60 days depending on the particular circumstances. To help care for extended family members, you can use 3 days if the person resides in the metropolitan area and 5 days for family members outside of the area.

### PERSONAL BUSINESS LEAVE

We have 3 days of personal business leave annually which are part of our paid leave days. Personal leave days are not lost if not used. They are converted into accumulated paid leave days for the following year. All personal business leave days are discretionary, meaning that you can use them for any purpose you wish. If you need a personal leave day to extend a school holiday or during the last five days of the school year it has to be approved by the Joint Committee.\* Approval depends upon your reason for wanting the day. Generally, days used for unique family events (an out-of-town wedding, for example) are approved; the Administration usu-

ally argues against other uses. When you submit your request to Joint Committee via Cheryl Goodgine's office it helps to send a copy to the ROEA. That allows us to be better prepared to represent you at Joint Committee. Since the Joint Committee meets only monthly, it is good to get your request in early.

You do not need the permission of Joint Committee or anyone else to use sick leave for any work day, regardless of whether it adjoins a holiday or falls within the last five days of the school year. It doesn't matter if the day is for your own illness or the illness of a family member. You process the absence via the SEMS system as you normally do.

Our members often rely on an administrator to help them understand paid leave. It is a mistake to do this. I have learned of numerous incidents from our members in which they were told that their requests for sick leave, particularly to care for family members, were not covered by the contract. They were either not able to take a leave that they had a contractual right to, or they were not paid for a leave for which they were entitled to pay.

Contact the ROEA for accurate information about your rights. Time and again administrators have taken advantage of our teachers in this regard. Your contractual rights are often intentionally overlooked by our administrators in their misguided zeal to save money. Don't allow yourself or your family members to be victimized in this fashion.

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\*The Joint committee meets monthly to review contract related issues. The usual participants are Cheryl Goodgine and Carol Hansen who represent administrative issues and Laurie Moore, Marcia Rauschendorfer and me representing ROEA concerns.

# CLASS SIZE RELIEF GRIEVANCE

We have a class size relief grievance which addresses the interpretation of contract language regarding special education students and class size relief. The arbitration hearing should occur sometime this fall. Four of our members - two from elementary school and two from Royal Oak High School - have co-signed the grievance. In order to best convey the issue, I'll start by reviewing the class size relief process.

Teachers are entitled to class size relief based on the number of students in their class. The recommended number of students for most of our classes is stipulated in the contract. When a class exceeds the contract number, the teacher submits a class size relief request to the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee is our contract maintenance committee. Our teachers are represented by Laurie Moore, our MEA Uniserv Director, Marcia Rauschendorfer, our Executive Vice President, and me. We usually meet with Cheryl Goodgine and Carol Hansen.

Typically, requests in which a class exceeds the contract number are readily acknowledged and agreed to by the administrative members of Joint Committee. That is not the case, however, when the class size number is met, but a special education student is in the class. The administration denies most of these requests. The grievance addresses the issue of class size relief when a class has special education students in it and the contract number is reached, but not exceeded.

The ROEA's interpretation of our contract is that with a special education student in the class, the class number stipulated in the contract only has to be reached, not exceeded. The administration disagrees. Their position is that the term "priority consideration for relief" for classes with special education students merely means that we more thoroughly consider these situations but without any contractual imperative to act on our consideration. We believe this interpretation is wrong as it relegates the special education language to be meaningless.

## MEMBER MEETING

NOVEMBER 3rd

## Money Saving Tips

**Get organized and avoid missed payments.** I've missed a payment or two because the bill got buried beneath a stack of papers. Get organized and avoid those late payment penalties. If you do miss a payment, call your creditor and ask to have the penalty removed. They'll usually accommodate the request, at least the first time.

**Make your own coffee.** If you buy coffee from a trendy coffee shop, this can save you tons every year. At \$4 a pop, Starbucks (or similar) coffee can add up to nearly \$1,500 a year if purchased once a day. Twice a day, and you can double that figure. Making coffee at home costs only cents, and if you buy [Fair Trade coffee](#), you're helping poor farmers and the environment. Buy in bulk to save more.

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## Classified Ads

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Competitive rates with many discounts.

<http://www.belvaderepetcare.com>

Cheryl with Belvadere Pet Care

[cheryl@belvaderepetcare.com](mailto:cheryl@belvaderepetcare.com)

248-808-2107

### **Chuck Cox**

#### **Real Estate Agent**

Century 21 - Town & Country

248-652-8000 (office)

248-608-3549 (direct)

248-252-4931 (cell)

### **Motorized wheelchair**

Almost new. Only used for 1 month. Easy to use with easy to remove battery pack.

Price negotiable. Retail for \$1500.

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Gary Friedman

If you would like to place an ad, email [cadinen@aol.com](mailto:cadinen@aol.com) with information for the ad. There's no charge to ROEA members and their families.

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