Rep Scott

Local presidents,

To put it bluntly, we are under assault in Lansing.

The legislation being considered on a daily basis at the Capitol (emergency managers, step freezes, mandatory privatization, mandatory health insurance payments, budget cuts, etc.) are outright attacks on our students, our members, our communities and our future.

And we must take action accordingly.

On Friday, the MEA Board of Directors voted unanimously in favor of several actions MEA will be taking to ratchet up our efforts around the ongoing legislative crisis. The most pressing of these is the following vote that needs to be taken by each of your locals:

Job Action Authorization

Motion: The MEA Board of Directors directs that the president of each local holds a general membership meeting between March 14 and April 14, 2011. The purpose of this meeting is to conduct an election using the following ballot language:

"Do you give MEA the authority to initiate crisis activities up to and including job action?"

The results of this election shall be sent to President Salters by each local by April 15, 2011. The compiled results shall be given to the MEA Board of Directors at the April 28, 2011 meeting, in Executive Session.

Let me be clear on what this vote means. It authorizes MEA to engage in significant activities - up to and including a work stoppage - that will increase the pressure on our legislators. But more importantly, it is a way for us to ramp up our crisis activities and ensure our members understand the severity of the situation. It provides us with the backing of our members to engage in larger scale, public activities in response to these attacks on our rights and our future.

It is certain that given the number of locals we have across the state that this action will garner public and media attention. Our message is simple:

* MEA will not stand silent while Michigan's public schools and middle class are under attack.

* These votes are our way of increasing the awareness and action among our members statewide to stand in defense of our jobs, our rights and the futures of our students and communities.

* Should lawmakers fail to end these attack on the people of Michigan, we will not shy away from taking action to stop them.

Each step of the way, we will communicate with you about these actions, which are being carefully coordinated with our brothers and sisters from across the labor and progressive community (including with AFT, UAW, SEIU and AFL-CIO).

For now, I ask you to hold these membership meetings and crisis votes as soon as possible and report the results to me. We will not be publicizing the results of these votes...rather, we will use them to make informed decisions about when and where we take actions - and how we communicate with our members about them.

Another Board action on Friday called on me to communicate with each MEA member about the gravity of the situation. That communication is under development and will be shared with you before it is sent via U.S. mail to every MEA member. Expect to hear more from me on that by week's end.

We will be providing you with materials and information (in addition to the constant communication to you and your members from the MEA Voice Online, Capitol Comments and www.mea.org <http://www.mea.org/>) to help support you in holding these meetings. As a start, attached is a brief Q&A about what this vote means and what consequences may come of it.

Thank you for your leadership and solidarity as we advocate for our members and our students in these unprecedented times. I am confident that history will look back at 2011 as a turning point for Michigan - and I am steadfast in my belief that public school employees and Michigan's Middle Class will be on the winning side of this fight.

Sincerely,

Iris K. Salters

MEA President

JOB ACTION AUTHORIZATION

Q & A FOR LOCAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

1. **What does my vote supporting this resolution mean?**

   By supporting the proposed resolution, you are agreeing that you will join your colleagues in crisis activities authorized by the MEA, which include a wide range of options from after work activities in your own community to a possible statewide work stoppage.

2. **How long will this authorization last?**

   The authorization will only last through the end of the current school year.

3. **What actions is this authorizing? Are we talking about a statewide strike?**

   The proposed resolution is not specific, allowing MEA to monitor the situation and decide what will be most effective. The proposed actions could be limited to local demonstrations outside of work hours or a statewide march on the Capitol on a non-working day. In order for MEA to know the level of support for significant action in response to the Legislative assaults on school employees, it is important to know how many members are willing to take the action decided by MEA – up to and including a work stoppage. The MEA officers are very much aware of the potential ramifications of a work stoppage and will only call one if the Legislative action warrants that action.

4. **Will I have to go to Lansing to protest the Legislature's actions?**

   That will depend upon a review by MEA of the most effective action(s) for MEA members to take. The proposed resolution is flexible enough for MEA to decide the best way to stop the legislative assaults on school employees and students.

5. **Will I lose pay if I do not report for work?**

   That will depend upon individual circumstances. If you have the right to take personal business leave or other appropriate paid leave, you may not lose pay. However, you should only vote for this proposed resolution if you believe the legislative assaults are so severe that you are willing to risk the loss of pay, and possibly, the loss of your employment.

6. **Can I be fired if we go out on strike?**

Since strikes in the public sector are illegal in Michigan, there is the possibility that you could be fired for engaging in a strike. That is why it is critical before MEA makes any decision regarding authorization of a work stoppage, we need to know if you and your colleagues are willing to take that action. It would be a significant action that sends a message to the Legislature and the public about the impact these attacks will have on your working conditions and your students' learning conditions. You should only vote to support the proposed resolution if you believe the potential actions of the Legislature are significant enough to warrant that response.

It is simply not possible to replace all or most school employees in the state. A public school employee has the right to an individual hearing at which it must be proved that the employee engaged in an illegal strike. The employee has the right to appeal that determination through the Michigan courts. It is, to say the least, a time-consuming and expensive process for school districts.

7. **Am I protected if I call in sick during a work stoppage?**

The appropriate use of sick leave is governed by your local contract. Under most circumstances, you will still be subject to discipline up to and including discharge if your school employer determines that you are not using sick leave appropriately and are engaging in an unlawful strike. You would have the right to challenge docking of your pay through the grievance procedure of your contract. Any action to fine school employees for allegedly engaging in a strike would require hearings before the Michigan Employment Relations Commission.

8. **Will MEA represent me if I am fired for supporting an authorized statewide work stoppage?**

MEA will defend any member who is disciplined or discharged for supporting an authorized job action. Because there is strength in numbers, a unified action provides the greatest protection to you.

9. **Won't these actions hurt our students?**

While there may be some inconvenience for your students, you will need to weigh that against the impact of the Legislature's actions on students' right to a quality education. Your working conditions are those students' learning conditions. In voting on this proposed resolution you will need to decide for yourself whether these actions will help or hurt your students in the long run.

MEA STATEWIDE
JOB ACTION BALLOT

2011

Do you give MEA the authority to initiate crisis activities up to and including job action?

YES ☐ NO ☐