

Victory and thanks

Are we happy Montanans overwhelmingly raised the minimum wage?

You bet.

Are we happy our judicial system works as intended—to keep folks honest—to correctly read and enforce the law—to jettison constitutional and statutory issues fraudulently qualified for the ballot?

Yes, we are.

And are we happy that Jon Tester, born and bred in Montana, will be the next U.S. Senator from Montana?

Color us blue with pleasure.

These victories belong to thousands of individuals and organizations across Montana, but we, MEA-MFT, earned the right to lead the victory parade. Let no one doubt our contributions nor belittle our successes.

Many to thank

My thanks and regards to all. The list is long.

First and foremost, our members. Member dues and voluntary contributions to COPE. Member phone calls to ID voters and to get out the vote. Members working primary election polling places to gather signatures for the minimum wage. And especially members voting—in very large numbers—for our issues and our candidates. Because of our members Montana's poorest paid working citizens get a much too-long, inexplicably delayed pay raise, CI-97 and its ugly siblings get the boot, and Senator Tester goes to Washington.

Our governance leaders. From our grass roots to the president's office, governance empowered our union to secure and invest the human and financial resources necessary to do the job right.

Our talented, committed staff—all of whom willingly tacked into fierce political winds and blew the pirates away.

Coalitions we helped build. First "Raise Montana." Then "Not In Montana." Thousands of brothers and sisters across our state. Brothers and sisters in the labor movement, in faith based communities, in low income and senior citizens groups, and in business and tax payer organiza-

tions. Brothers and sisters tired of miserable hourly wages, tired of anarchist mystery megabucks from New York City laundered through Winifred, and tired of bald faced, unapologetic political corruption.

Governor Schweitzer—he who carries a big stick and knows how to use it. No fear here. Right out in front from the beginning for the stuff in which we believe. Opposed to the stuff we oppose. Ready to verbally joust with libertarian heavy-weights and disparage batboy pretenders.

And finally, NEA and AFT. Never in our history have we worked more closely with our two national affiliates to do what must be done. We could NOT have done what we did without them. United, together we delivered positive results, not just for Montana, but for our entire nation.

The message is clear. Should any member or nonmember ask, what has MEA-MFT done for me lately, tell them our story. Tell them of our electoral victories. Tell them we are marching at the head of the parade.

The work goes on

But lest we fall victim to extended celebration and hubris, please know we do not yet stand firmly on the edge of a new generation of progressive politics and policies.

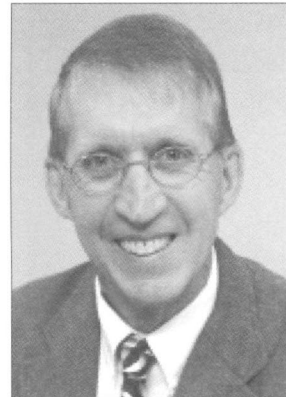
Yes, ballot issues to increase the minimum wage passed wherever they were offered nationwide. Yes, courts and voters everywhere soundly rejected CI-97-like proposals. And, yes, there has been a partisan sea change in our nation's capital.

But have we stepped out of the anti-government, anti-public school, libertarian woods right here in Montana?

No.

The too closely divided, deeply partisan legislature Montanans have once again elected does not bode well for the bills we have in mind to fund good government and public schools and to protect and enhance the role labor unions play in the work place and our political universe.

In short, the 2007 Legislature will be a struggle. Stay tuned. ■



BY ERIC FEAYER
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'MEA-MFT earned the right to lead the victory parade. But are we out of the woods? No.'