

Ballot issue government: More big bugs to stomp

MEA-MFT has been fighting ballot issues promoting proposed constitutional amendments to gut shoot public schools and local governments in virtually every election year since it seems like forever.

Way back in 1986, we successfully warred against CI-27, a proposed constitutional amendment that would have eliminated property taxes.

Unfortunately, CI-27 was just the beginning of one ballot issue after another intended to destroy tax structures and/or viciously cap state and local expenditures.

We have helped defeat them all: Most famously CI-75 in 1998 and most recently, CI-97 in 2006.

But there is no end in sight...no light at the end of a dark tunnel of proposed anti-tax, anti-government, anti-public school amendments to the Montana Constitution.

For example, CI-99 has qualified for petition status. Somewhere out there someone may be asking you to sign. **Don't sign.**

CI-99 would embed in our constitution a 1.5 percent cap on annual increases in residential property taxes. If CI-99 were to become law, public schools and all local government programs and services that depend on property taxes would immediately find themselves in BIG TIME trouble. **Don't sign.**

Over the last two decades or so, MEA-MFT has made a huge difference (maybe **THE** difference) in defending public education, programs, and services from folks who do not like us much.

Maybe that's why there is another ballot issue out there—the duplicitously misnamed *Montana Open and Clean Government Act*—that “prohibits political contributions by labor unions that have collective bargaining agreements with state or local governments.”

If passed, I-156 would eliminate MEA-MFT and every other public employee union from engaging in ballot issue government and political candidate support. Read the text and you discover that if MEA-MFT violates the act, we are decertified as a bargaining unit!

No more MEA-MFT fighting bad ballot issues like CI-99 and I-156. No more MEA-MFT contributions promoting school mill levies and bond issues. No more voluntary MEA-MFT member COPE contributions to political candidates. No more MEA-MFT political action!

If Montanans had passed a similar proposition a generation ago, which ballot issue bullet over the last 22 years would have killed public schools?

We believe I-156 is blatantly unconstitutional. But to litigate and prove our conviction, we will spend plenty of our members' dues dollars. It would be better, cheaper to simply keep it off the ballot.

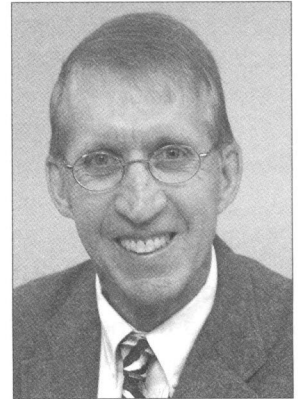
So...**don't sign.** Spread the word.

MEA-MFT is one big union of Montanans doing incredibly important work that matters. To protect and enhance the work our members do, MEA-MFT wades full force with our eyes wide open into ballot issue government and political candidate support. To do anything less would be to fail our members, public schools, and public programs everywhere in our great state.

Post script: Twenty-three MEA-MFT members are running for the 2009 Legislature: Four Republicans, 19 Democrats. Four members are running against MEA-MFT COPE recommended incumbents. Four are running against each other: two in a Democratic Party primary and two in the November general election. One new candidate is running unopposed.

Two Helena teachers are running for the Democratic Party nomination for governor and lieutenant governor. And as reported last time we wrote, Linda McCulloch is running for secretary of state; John Parker is running for the Democratic Party nomination for attorney general; and Denise Juneau, Sam Kitzenberg, Claudette Morton, and Holly Raser are all running for the Democratic Party nomination for superintendent of public instruction.

All good reasons to vote in the primary election June 3. ■



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