

MEA-Retired Tribune

October 2014

Senate Bills Will Dismantle Retirement Plans (Capitol Comments)

A current Senate package of bills (SB 722-728) would make MPSERS reforms, including a shift to a defined contribution plan. These new bills seem to especially target new hires, but really all employees are at risk.

SB 727 would put new hires into a defined contribution plan instead of a defined benefit plan. They would also not be eligible to purchase service credits, except for active duty military service credits. SB 725 eliminates disability retirements for future hires.

In SB 724, all employees are prohibited from the purchase of service credit after June 30, 2014, except for active duty military service credits.

This push isn't new. For years, the Mackinac Center has been pushing to shut down the pension system and convert it into a 401k plan. That leaves your pension at the mercy of the stock market which reduces the number of employees paying into MPSERS, and causing further underfunding.

The Mackinac Center has written about this idea for the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the group of corporate lobbyists and legislators who advance their anti-union, anti-middle class agenda via state legislatures; Michigan's included.

You know the Mackinac Center has its fingerprints all over these Senate bills. Read more about their plan at www.meamatters.com.

Who is the Mackinac Center and why is it attacking the MEA? (MEA Matters)

- The Mackinac Center bills itself as an independent think tank, but it's actually funded by corporations that want part of the \$12 billion public schools budget.
- The Mackinac Center pretends it wants teachers and school employees to save money, but it's responsible for every recent pay and benefit cut imposed on them.
- It wants to shut down the state pension system.
- It's trying to turn members against the MEA so its corporate funders can cash in on public schools by converting them into private companies.
- The Koch Brothers, the Devos family and Exxon fund its operations.
- It writes anti-worker legislation promoted nationwide by ALEC.

Why does the Mackinac Center want MEA members to quit? (MEA matters)

- The Mackinac Center [works through the Legislature to weaken the MEA](#), giving it less political muscle. The fewer members it has, the fewer political dollars it can raise and the fewer bodies it can turn out in an election.
- If it can severely weaken the MEA, its corporate funders can move on to [privatize \(monetize\) the public schools](#), through many more [privately run charter schools](#), [private on-line cyber schools](#), and [vouchers](#).

3% Withheld From Wages Going to Court (Michael M. Shoudy, General Counsel, MEA)

Oral argument on the 2012 amendments to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement Act (Public Act 300) is scheduled to take place before the Michigan Supreme Court on October 9, 2014 during the morning session. **THIS IS NOT THE 3% CASE BASED ON THE 2010 AMENDMENTS TO Michigan Public School Employees Retirement Act (PUBLIC ACT 75).**

The 2012 case relates to elections that members of the retirement system were required to make in 2013. We lost this case in the lower courts. After legal arguments on October 9 are presented, the Court officially has until 2015 to render its decision. However, we are hopeful that a decision will be issued in 2014.

The 2010 case relates to the 3% withheld from wages. That money is currently being held in escrow by court order. In that case, we won in the trial court and in front of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The State of Michigan appealed the decision to the Michigan Supreme Court. On May 22, 2014, the Michigan Supreme Court issued an order putting this case on hold, stating they wanted to decide the 2012 case first. While the MEA understands how important the 2010 case is to our members, there is no mechanism to force the Court to decide the case. We have asked that the Court expedite its decision regarding the 3%.

Since taking control in 2011 the Republicans in Congress have:

- Held 54 votes to repeal health care for millions of Americans, costing taxpayers approximately \$78 million (CBS News);
- Refused to hold votes on raising the minimum wage, equal pay for women, or fixing our broken immigration system (Washington Post);
- Shut down government for 15 days, costing taxpayers more than \$25 billion (Standards & Poor);
- Overseen the two least productive sessions of Congress in over 60 years (NBC News);
- Two corporate-chain charter companies seeking a contract with York, Pennsylvania, are Mosaica Education Inc. and Charter Schools USA. In 2012, Mosaica had a five year contract to run the Muskegon Heights Public School Academy in Muskegon Heights, Michigan, but quit after two years because it couldn't turn a profit.

Dates to Remember:

October 4, 2014 – MEA Fall RA

NOVEMBER 4, 2014 VOTE

December 15, 2014 – Deadline for nominations and bios for Region Directors, MEA, NEA, and NEA-Retired delegates.

March 16-27, 2015 – Reading of MEA Scholarships

March 24-26, 2015 - NEA-Retired Organizing Conference

DID YOU KNOW?

- Medicare Part B will cover equipment that you use in the home if it qualifies as durable medical equipment (DME). Durable, meaning you can use it again and designed to help a medical condition or injury. They must be suitable for the home although you can use them outside the home. Some examples of DME covered by Medicare are walkers, crutches, wheelchairs, power scooters, hospital beds, seat lift and home oxygen equipment. You must get a doctor's prescription and use a DME supplier.
- Mark Schauer and Rick Snyder will debate October 12 on TV at Wayne State University at 6 p.m. The debate will be televised.
- MEA-Retired members are lobbying legislators with MEA lobbyist Dr. Dave Michaelson. The first session was September 17. Thank you to those who participated.
- Thank you to everyone who is attending the Snyder rallies protesting what has happened to retirees and schools.
- Google, FaceBook, and Yahoo joined countless other organizations and individuals who've kicked ALEC's crooked agenda to the curb. However, AOL refuses to join them.

New Bill Halts Charter School Expansion Until Financial and Academic Standards Are In Place

After repeated calls for more transparency and accountability from charter schools, Representatives Sarah Roberts (D-St. Clair Shores) and Ellen Cogen Lipton (D-Huntington Woods) introduced [HB 5852](#) that calls for a moratorium on the opening of any more charter schools until there is legislation that guarantees transparency, accountability and high educational standards.

The reforms covered in the bill would specifically place restrictions on charter authorizing bodies, charter schools and educational management organizations.

Roberts said, "We have to ensure that charter schools are transparent and accountable to the taxpayers whose money they are spending, and that the primary focus is on delivering a quality education to their students."

Under the bill, complete transparency and full financial disclosure would be required. Until now, charters have avoided full disclosure, claiming they run private businesses and are exempt from disclosing their business practices. There would be penalties for failing to comply with this requirement.

The bill also calls for comprehensive ethics and conflict of interest standards for charter schools, education management organizations, members of charter school boards of directors and authorizing bodies.

Finally, the bill assures high quality educational standards and outcomes for pupils through a more rigorous charter school authorizing process and strict oversight of existing charter schools.

Results of the Health Survey taken through Constant Contact September 17, 2014

Many members participated in the health survey that was sent to all our E-mail Constant Contact members. Hopefully you participated in this survey. The results are below.

Have you contacted any of our health care providers since January 1, 2014?

Yes 1127--76.0 %

No 344--23.2 %

No Response(s) 11--1 %

Totals 1482--100%

If yes, please check which provider(s).

Blue Cross/Blue Shield 786--77.5 %

Priority Health 86--8.4 %

CatamaranRx 443--43.7 %

Delta Dental 301--29.7 %

Vision Care (BC/BS) 201--19.8 %

Other 21--2.0 %

Totals 1013--100%



REMINDER

Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans

MEA-Retired is a member of this coalition

THE NEXT MiARA MEMBERSHIP MEETING WILL BE HELD

Monday, October 13th

at 11:00 a.m.

UAW Region 1

27800 George Merrelli Drive

Warren, MI

Lunch will be provided (please register)

All MEA-Retired members are welcome!

Special Guests

Mark Schauer, Democratic Candidate for Governor

Debbie Dingell, Democratic Candidate for Congress

Gary Peters, Candidate for US Senate

State Senator, Vincent Gregory

RSVP to Beckie Bridgewater

rbridge@uaw.net



Vote!!!