

MEA SCREENING AND RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

Many myths get passed around about the MEA S & R process. We get feedback on a regular basis that indicate these myths have risen to almost the status of urban legends. Myth number one is “MEA is telling me how to vote.” That is not true. A local committee of your fellow MEA members interview all candidates who are willing to be interviewed for an elected position. The committee is generally comprised of seven to nine members including, ESP, Higher Education, EA and retired members. MEA staff do not have voting rights on the committee. Great efforts are made to have all employee categories represented; additionally, all coordinating councils who have school districts or colleges which are wholly or partially contained in the legislative district have an equal right to participate in the screening. After interviewing all of the candidates in a race, the committee decides which candidate to recommend. Sometimes the committee votes to not recommend any candidate. If the committee makes a recommendation, it is passed on to the entire MEA membership who reside in the legislative district, both retired and active members.

Myth number two is that the recommendations are made on the basis of social issues such as “Right to Life” or “Gun Control”. Again that is not true. The questionnaire that candidates fill out only asks about two issues: support for public education and support for labor issues (such as prohibited topics of bargaining and Right to Work). The S & R booklet also contains a series of “Sample” questions for the committee to use in the interview, or committee members can fashion their own questions and frequently ask about things that are relevant to the local situation. In either case, the questions are only about support for public education and employee rights.

The screening process is slightly different for the statewide offices such as Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, the education boards and the Michigan Supreme Court. In those cases, because the geographic area that each statewide office contains, the screening committee is comprised as follows: the MEA-PAC chairperson (or designee), the MEA-PAC vice chairperson, four (4) MEA-PAC Council delegates elected by the MEA-PAC Council, with no more than one (1) elected from each MEA zone, a person elected by the MEA Minority Concerns Committee, two (2) MEA Board of Directors members appointed by the MEA president, subject to confirmation by the MEA Board of Directors, the presiding officer of the MEA ESP Caucus, MAHE and MEA-Retired or designee serving ex officio, without vote, the Educator Caucus chairperson of the two (2) major political parties or designee serving ex officio, without vote, and an MEA staff person serving as an ex officio member, without a vote. This committee interviews all of the candidates for statewide office who are willing to be interviewed and decides if a recommendation is to be made, and if one is made, who that candidate is. The same criteria of public education support and employee rights are used for the statewide candidates. The recommendations of the statewide S & R committee are transmitted to the entire MEA membership, both active and retired.

Participation on the local screening and recommendation committees for state representatives and senate as well as various school board and other local offices are open to all members, active and retired. If you are willing to serve on a committee, make that know to your area Uniserv Office.