
You Are Invited!

Please join a public conversation about lowering property taxes and ensuring excellence in public education and in public services.

Where: Bavarian Inn
700 W. Lexington Blvd.
Glendale

When: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Tuesday, **November 27**

The discussion is one of a series being held by the Wisconsin Way, a growing coalition of state organizations. To learn more go to www.wisconsinway.org.

Domestic Partner Benefits Hearing

School Board member Jennifer Morales introduced a resolution in support of equal treatment of the district's employees. An excerpt from the resolution states: "and in particular support of the equal provision of employment benefits regardless of an employee's sexual orientation or family status."

The resolution is scheduled for public hearing at the **November 20** meeting of the Board's Finance and Personnel Committee. The meeting will take place at the MPS central office, starting at 6:30 p.m.

The MTEA's teacher bargaining team advocated for domestic partner benefit parity in the last round of contract talks. The new contract will establish a joint MPS/MTEA labor management committee to develop a possible resolution for this bargaining issue.

What's a Teacher Vacancy?

Under the teacher contract, a vacancy is created when a teacher:

- ◆ Retires or resigns.
- ◆ Receives a **formal** leave of absence.
- ◆ Requests an incompatibility transfer from a school.
- ◆ Is absent more than 60 days during a semester.

Vacancies also occur when a new position is added to a school or when a position vacant at the end of a semester remains vacant the next semester.

Some Apparent Vacancies, Are Not

While a retirement or resignation clearly creates a teacher vacancy, other situations are complicated. For example, a teacher medically unable to work due to pregnancy/childbirth may be absent up to 12 consecutive weeks without losing her assignment.

There are several ways for teachers to keep their assignments through the teacher contract and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). A long-term absence does not necessarily create a teacher vacancy.

Assigned to a Teacher Vacancy?

While there may be a question as to whether you are in a teacher vacancy or not, the following is important information and advice.

The substitute teacher contract provides teacher pay and benefits (except pension) to those assigned to a teacher vacancy. **If you are assigned to a vacancy and do not already have MPS group health and dental insurance coverage, you should apply ASAP.** You will **not** receive these benefits unless you apply for them.

To obtain the enrollment form, call MPS Benefits and Insurance at 475-8158. You may also go to Room 124 at the MPS central office to pick up the form.

When you request the insurance application form, you **may** be told that you are not in a teacher vacancy. That may be accurate because of the complicated situations such as the example noted above.

However, MPS is apparently **not** notifying eligible substitutes in teacher vacancies of their right to these negotiated, Board-paid insurance benefits, in a timely manner (if at all). We recommend you call to request an insurance application as soon as you believe you are in a vacancy.

If you experience any problems or delays, please contact Cheryl Barczak of the MTEA staff at barczakc@mtea.weac.org or 259-1990.



Action Alert on Legislation

We need your help in urging state legislators to support two bills that will help address the serious financial problems MPS faces. As a result of the recent political raucous over the property tax levy rate for Milwaukee, schools will be forced to make more budget cuts that will hurt our students, especially next school year and beyond.

One bill (**SB-299**) would provide short-term relief. The other - **AJR-35/SJR-27** - calls for major changes in the state's school funding law; there will be a public hearing on it on November 15.

There is also a bill (**AB-482**) in the state Assembly to end the residency requirement for MPS teachers, Legislators need to hear why **individual** educators support this change.

MTEA Support Registered and Voiced at Hearings

Our union has officially registered in support of these bills (and others). MTEA representatives also testify at many legislative hearings in Madison.

For example, Debbie Karow spoke in support of ending the residency requirement at a recent Assembly committee hearing. Debbie is an MTEA Executive Board member and chairs the MTEA Freedom of Residency Committee. (This is a joint committee - open to all MTEA members.)

Your Contacts Are Key!

For information on how to contact legislators in support of these three bills, go to mtea.org.

Contacting your elected representatives in the Legislature is very important. When many educators speak out, their individual voices powerfully echo the collective voice of our union.

Thanksgiving Holiday Pay

The holiday pay provision of the MTEA/MBSD Substitute Teacher Contract states: "Where regular substitute teachers are serving in a teaching assignment the last school day prior to a holiday and in an assignment the first school day following the holiday, they shall be paid for the holiday." Thanksgiving Day is a paid holiday.

You should receive pay for Thanksgiving Day if you are a regular substitute teacher and worked in a teaching assignment on Wednesday, November 21, and again on Monday, November 26 (**whether it is the same assignment or not**). Pay for Thanksgiving Day should be on the December 14 paycheck.

PHA Completion: The Deadlines

If you have MPS group health care coverage, either Aetna or UnitedHealthcare, **you and your spouse** need to fill out the personal health assessment (PHA) by **December 15, 2007**.

Paper PHA Request Deadline - November 15

If you choose to complete the PHA questionnaire on paper, you need to request a copy by November 15, 2007. The only way to obtain a copy for you and your spouse is to call **1-866-904-2615** (press "7").

The November 15 deadline is critical because four time-consuming steps will follow: Processing your request for paper copies; mailing them to your home; you and your spouse each completing the PHA; and mailing the completed PHAs back. Especially with the holiday mail delays in December, you will probably **not** meet the December 15 deadline if you request a paper copy after November 15.

We Recommend Taking the PHA Online

If you and your spouse complete the PHA online, you'll have no worries over mail delays and other uncertainties. And you'll receive your confidential results almost instantly!

For quick access to the PHA, go to mtea.org. Use the "Quick Link" to access the "GoodHealth" site.

Meet Deadline to Avoid a \$200 Penalty

If you and your spouse do not complete the PHA by December 15, 2007, you will pay a \$200 premium contribution. There will be two \$100 deductions from your paychecks - the first on February 22, 2008; the second on March 21, 2008.

First Step to Many Benefits

The joint wellness/health education program provides you and your family with the opportunity for many benefits such as earning a \$200 reward. Completing the PHA is an essential first step.

At the November 14 meeting of the MTEA Building Representatives, Joan Heithoff will provide a detailed explanation of the GoodHealth program. Joan is the MTEA staff member who specializes in insurance benefits.

Social Opportunity

Meet and Greet the Sub Council

Please join us at O'Brien's, 4928 West Vliet Street on Thursday, **December 6**. The conversations and fun will start at 5:30 p.m. Cash bar. Door prizes. **"Be There, or Be Square!"**