

### Legislative Update

The enclosed letter from Mike Langyel explains that Rep. Tamara Grigsby and Sen. Spencer Coggs are introducing legislation that will include steps teachers believe will help MPS students succeed. It's being drafted at this time, but the legislative landscape is changing quickly. On December 8, Governor Doyle announced a special session of the Legislature on December 16 to consider the mayoral takeover bill he supports. (It's usually referred to as Sen. Lena Taylor's bill.)

### What Insiders Say

Most political insiders do not expect the Legislature to pass a mayoral takeover bill on December 16. Some expect a public hearing will be held in Milwaukee in early January.

### Please Call Today

We strongly recommend that you call your legislators now. Whether lawmakers act this month or next, they need to hear what their constituents believe is the best way to improve MPS. Your voice can make a difference.

### Calling Details

The enclosed flyer lists the name and Madison phone number for state legislators elected by city voters (entirely or in part). Because many lawmakers will not be able to personally receive your call, the flyer includes ideas for leaving your phone message.

## Would Mayoral Control Improve MPS?

Have you ever thought (or hoped) that changing the governance of MPS from an elected school board to mayoral control would improve the district? There are valid reasons for such thoughts. Past school boards have made some very bad decisions, especially when voucher proponents held the majority. The current board is problematic on certain issues - including its efforts to take away employee health benefits.

Despite the shortcomings of the present structure, there are compelling reasons why mayoral takeover would be worse. Three key reasons are described below.

### Student Achievement Gains Are Not Made

The primary goal for mayoral takeover in other cities has been to improve student outcomes, usually defined as standardized test results. To date, there is no empirical evidence that mayoral control significantly improves student achievement. There has been a lot of media spin and rhetoric, but no conclusive proof.

### It's the Democratic Structure, Not the Personalities

Maintaining the democratic right of Milwaukeeans to elect their school board is **not** about the individuals - past, present, or future - who are elected to the board. It's about having a voice, through elections and access after elections, with a governmental body established for the sole purpose of providing the best education possible.

On the other hand, the mayor has multiple priorities. And no mayor can be as accessible to citizens, parents, and staff as a nine-member board.

### Contract Struggles: Even More Difficult

As to contract rights and benefits, an accessible school board does not guarantee fair treatment at the bargaining table. There is ample evidence to the contrary, historically and today. Our union's efforts to bargain contracts that attract and retain the best educators and improve learning conditions for MPS students are resisted during every round of talks.

However, educators in cities with mayoral control have fared even worse. A number of states have changed the contracts and restricted the bargaining rights of teachers, as part of the laws they enacted to give city mayors control of urban schools. Contractual rights have changed - in statehouse backrooms, **not** at the bargaining table.

### Want More Details?

Need background information on mayoral takeover? Why our union is opposed to it? Would you like to review the alternative developed by MTEA and WEAC leaders, the Milwaukee Opportunity Plan?

For specifics, go to [mtea.org](http://mtea.org). For more on MTEA opposition, go to the October 22, 2009 [Sharpener](#) (Newsletters>Sharpener>Archives). **And** click on "Milwaukee Opportunity Plan" near the bottom of the right-hand column on the home page.

# Please Complete the PHA!

## Deadline: Tuesday, December 15

Taking the personal health assessment (PHA) *annually* is essential to the negotiated wellness and health education program.

### Why Complete the PHA Every Year?

The PHA provides you with confidential information about your health status, including risks, and individualized, voluntary program options that contribute to healthy living. The PHA is like an annual "State of Your Health" address - reviewing "issues" and offering program choices for your future GoodHealth.

**Quick PHA Access** - To meet the deadline, you and your spouse must complete the PHA online. For quick access, go to [mtea.org](http://mtea.org) and click on the "Take the PHA" Quick Link.

**Need a Computer? Help?** A computer is available in Room 124 of the MPS central office at 5225 West Vliet Street, to take the PHA. Assistance, if needed, is available weekdays from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

### Policy Making in Your Union - the MTEA

Within the MTEA, there are four units: teachers, substitute teachers, educational assistants, and bookkeepers. Issues and positions affecting members in all four of the MTEA units are addressed at monthly meetings. The Representative Assembly (RA) meets after school on the second Wednesday of each month.

### Representing You

Substitute teachers members are represented at each RA by the eight members on the MSTA Executive Council. In addition to MSTA Council members, there are now four representative positions open to substitute teachers.

### You Can Participate

If you're interested in serving as a substitute teacher rep at RA meetings, please send a brief letter to:

**MSTA President John Fiandt**  
**MTEA Building**  
**5130 West Vliet Street**  
**Milwaukee WI 53208**

### December 29 Deadline

John will review applications postmarked by December 29. His recommendations will be considered at the January 7 MSTA Executive Council meeting. If appointed, you will be contacted promptly, so that you may participate at the January 14 RA meeting.

### Very Important Reminders:

- ◆ Be sure to hit "Send" and
- ◆ Print out the **confirmation number** for your records.

### Need to Motivate a Reluctant Spouse?

Taken the PHA yourself, but your spouse has not? We suggest that you stress the immediate, financial reason. If both you and your spouse do not complete the PHA by December 15, a **\$200** annual health care premium contribution will be deducted as follows:

- ◆ **\$100** on your February 19, 2010 paycheck
- ◆ **\$100** on your March 19, 2010 paycheck.

## Substitute Teacher Union Leaders

Within the MTEA, the Milwaukee Substitute Teachers' Association (MSTA) Executive Council addresses contract concerns and other issues that directly affect substitute teachers members. (In addition to electing the MSTA leaders to two-year terms, you have a direct voice at the Annual Substitute Teacher Membership Meeting.)

You'll find a list of MSTA leaders in the 2009-10 MTEA Date Book and at [mtea.org](http://mtea.org) (About Us>Elected Leaders). Please note a change in the Date Book: Joe Gayle has been appointed MSTA Treasurer. You may contact Joe at 371-0749 (home phone) or [jgayle1@wi.rr.com](mailto:jgayle1@wi.rr.com).