

NEAFT MERGER CAUCUS

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2009-2010 MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Please send membership form with \$20

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NEAFT Merger Messenger

Vol. 1, No. 1

Newsletter of the NEAFT Merger Caucus

Welcome to the NEAFT Caucus

By Morty Rosenfeld
NEAFT Merger Caucus Chair

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter of the NEAFT Merger Caucus. In the days, the weeks and the months ahead, we hope this publication will serve as a forum for merged affiliates of the National Education (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), providing them with a vehicle for a discussion of what they have learned from their mergers that might be helpful to each other. We hope also to reinvigorate discussion of a merger of the NEA and AFT, believing as we do that the rivalry that has historically existed between our two great national education unions must give way to the greater need to speak and act in union to confront the enemies of public education arrayed against us. Our members must be helped to understand that there is much that should unite us, and almost nothing of real importance to keep us apart.

If the day is to come when we speak with one loud and clear voice, it will have to arrive through the efforts of the members of both of our great organizations. As members of both the NEA and the AFT hear the success stories of what educators working together in one organization have accomplished, a groundswell in favor of merger can only be the result.

But make no mistake – merger will come about only when you and I and our colleagues continually raise the issue of merger, pointing out the great success of merger in New York. It will only come about when we celebrate Montana's accomplishments, and teach the lessons learned from the

experiences of Florida's merger arrangements. It will only come about when we let members know of the victories won by merged locals in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Austin, Texas and Wichita. Merger of our two great unions can only come about by making a national merger a central issue in the day to day work of both organizations.

Take the first step today. Attend one, or all, of the meetings of the NEAFT Merger Caucus here in San Diego throughout the RA. If you work in a state or a local with a merged union, come and tell us of the story of your merger, and better yet, the stories of your successes as one

voice for the educators of your district or your state.

If you do not work in a state or district with a merger, but are interested in hearing about the benefits of merger, get one or two members of your local to join you and come hear the news about success through merger. And forward this newsletter to members you think might be interested. Tell them of your interest in the work of the NEAFT Merger Caucus. If we all do that, the day when one great education union speaks powerfully for us all cannot be far off.

Morty Rosenfeld is the president of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Congress of Teachers in New York.

NEAFT Merger Caucus Meetings Set

The NEAFT Merger Caucus will meet throughout the NEA RA this week in San Diego. Meetings will be held at the Manchester Grand Hyatt, in room Manchester C.

As this issue goes to press, caucus meetings were tentatively set for the following dates/times:

July 1 — 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

July 2 – 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

July 3 – 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

July 4 – During the lunch break.

July 5 – During the lunch break.

July 6 – during the lunch break.

All meeting dates/times are subject to change. Notices of changes in dates/times will be posted in the spaces made available by the NEA at the convention.

To sign up for electronic news regarding the NEAFT Merger Caucus, e-mail your name, street address, local name, phone number and, or course, your e-mail address, to the *NEAFT Merger Messenger* Editor at gsolkovits@utla.net.

UTLA: having four affiliates makes for a better union

By Gregg Solkovits
NEAFT Merger Messenger Editor

It was way back in 1969 that the multiple teachers unions representing the educators of the Los Angeles Unified School District decided to turn the world of teacher unionism on its head, creating United Teachers Los Angeles, the first merged teachers union local in the nation's history.

It would not be fair or honest to say that UTLA's early history as an affiliate of the American Federation of

Teachers/California Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association/California Teachers Association was one without conflict. There was a great deal of distrust among some hardcore NEA activists of their "federation" colleagues, and vice versa. But even in its earliest years, as the embers of the strife that reflected so many years of rivalry among the various component unions that came together to form UTLA slowly burned out, UTLA achieved success after success. From a successful five week strike in 1970, to playing a key role in winning collective bargaining rights for educators and their unions, to forcing the state to substantially raise the amount of money provided by the state of California to its schools in the late 1970s, UTLA was a powerful force for students and educators both in Los Angeles and statewide.

As UTLA entered the 1980s, it was among the most respected unions in California and the nation. Being among the largest locals in both the AFT and the NEA, UTLA served as an example of what teachers unions could do when they worked in concert. Using the combined resources of both state affiliates and both national affiliates, UTLA gradually built one of the nation's best contracts for its members, and demanded, and won, recognition from the LAUSD for their

members' key roles as professional educators willingly to roll up their sleeves and improve the profession to which they had dedicated their lives.

Even in tough economic times – both in the early 1990s and today – UTLA continued to fight both in the state capitol and locally to minimize the impact of budget cuts to the classroom. But none of the successes of UTLA would be possible if it did not have the resources of four great affiliate unions to call upon. UTLA has been able to rely on its four affiliates for loaning of staff during strike build up or during contentious contract talks, for important research in key areas, for help in crafting quality communications programs – the list of ways the affiliates have helped UTLA grow strong and powerful is almost endless. Where other teacher union locals had to spend thousands and thousands of dollars fighting their rival local unions in the 1970s and 1980s, UTLA was spared this waste of precious resources. Instead, it built a reputation for taking on the big fights – defeating vouchers, pushing back on anti-union ballot measures, and opposing political candidates would have hurt public education. And with the help of its four affiliates, UTLA claimed victory after victory. Or as one of UTLA's favorite chants at rallies goes: "Teachers United Can Never Be Defeated".



How Montana Joined the Ranks of the Merged: A Chronology of the MEA-MFT Merger

1990
MEA President Eric Feaver and MFT President Jim McGarvey hold the state lottery accountable for deceitful claims that lottery revenue improves teachers' retirement.

1991
In response to the Clyde Park/Wilsall school consolidation, MEA and MFT successfully lobby HB 470 through the legislature, guaranteeing hiring preference for teachers and classified employees in school annexations and consolidations.

1992
Joint MEA-MFT candidate forum leads to joint endorsement of pro-education, pro-public employee candidates for federal and statewide office.

1993
First MEA-MFT legislative reception in Helena provides an opportunity for members to lobby their local legislators on issues of concern to public schools and public employees.

MEA and MFT lobby the Pension Security Act and Constitutional Amendment 25 through the legislature and a vote of the people (1994) to protect public employee pensions.

MEA and MFT lobby SB 15 into law, mandating a grievance procedure ending in final, binding arbitration in all public school employee collective bargaining agreements.

First MEA-MFT Classified Conference (professional development for classified members of both organizations)

1994
MEA and MFT form Montanans for Constitutional Principles to defeat anti-tax, anti-government constitutional initiatives CI-66 and CI-67.

First MEA-MFT Educators' Conference enlarges and enhances teacher-driven professional development.

Five MEA locals and an MFT local merge into one bargaining unit with one contract forming the Merged Missoula Classified Employees Organization, a working model for merger.

1995
MEA-MFT joint lobbying passes state employee pay increase. It also defeats efforts to: repeal steps and lanes; repeal binding arbitration of grievances; repeal school accreditation standards; and create charter schools without accreditation, teacher certification, and right to organize.

MFT President Jim McGarvey addresses

MEA Delegate Assembly. MEA President Eric Feaver addresses MFT Officers' Convention.

American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker and National Education Association President Keith Geiger make unprecedented joint appearance at MEA-MFT Educators' Conference in Missoula.

1996
MEA and MFT form the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation to sponsor Montana Teacher of the Year, Montana Teacher Forum, and National Board Certification scholarships.

MFT Executive Council resolves "The Montana Federation shall pursue full merger with the Montana Education Association."

MEA and MFT defeat ballot initiative to abolish constitutional power of Board of Regents.

1997
MEA-MFT merged legislative effort successfully sponsors legislation that guarantees an annual benefit adjustment for retirees in the Public Employee Retirement System. In addition, MEA and MFT lobbying increases state employee pay; defeats public employee right to work; defeats school tuition tax credits; and defeats charter schools without accreditation, teacher certification, and right to organize.

MEA Delegate Assembly declares it is "MEA's goal to pursue full merger with MFT."

AFT President Sandra Feldman is keynote speaker at MEA-MFT Educators' Conference in Billings.

MEA-MFT Merger Task Force develops constitution and merger transition document for the new merged organization. Task Force members determine the name of the merged organization will be "MEA-MFT."

1998
MEA-MFT Today, a joint newsletter, is created and published.

Montana Labor Institute, fostered by MEA and MFT to develop educational programs for and about union leadership, holds its first class.

Delegates at MEA Delegate Assembly and MFT Officers' Convention vote to approve MEA-MFT constitution and merger transition document.

Delegates at AFT's annual meeting vote to approve merger with NEA. However, delegates at NEA's Representative Assembly

vote against national merger following hot debate, but they also vote to allow state mergers – provided state affiliates follow NEA-developed guidelines.

NEA and AFT both begin developing guidelines for state affiliate mergers.

1999
MEA and MFT boards of directors begin meeting together.

MEA-PAC and MFT COPE, the political action committees of MEA and MFT, likewise begin meeting together.

MEA-MFT Transition Task Force is appointed to tackle the nitty-gritty details of merger, including governance districts, staff structure, and dues structure for the new merged organization. The task force presents recommendations to the MEA and MFT boards of directors for approval and further recommendation to the joint MEA-MFT Representative Assembly, meeting March 31-April 1, 2000.

MEA and MFT continue joint activities such as working to defeat CI-75, sponsoring the 1999 MEA-MFT Educators' Conference, and lobbying for a joint MEA-MFT legislative package during the 1999 Legislature.

The MEA-MFT lobbying team enjoys a near clean sweep in the '99 session, succeeding in all four priority goals: 1) Increased funding for K-12 schools; 2) a pay increase for state employees; 3) Guaranteed Annual Benefit Adjustment (GABA) for retirees in the Teachers' Retirement System; and 4) stopping bills harmful to public services, public employees, and children and public schools.

MEA-MFT staff are merged, with a single executive director.

2000
February and March: In separate votes, NEA and AFT determine that the merged MEA-MFT will meet their national guidelines for state mergers.

March 31-April 1: First annual MEA-MFT Representative Assembly meets. 400 delegates of MEA and MFT vote to approve dues structure, governance districts, and budget for the new merged organization: MEA-MFT.

May: MEA-MFT members vote for state officers (president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, NEA director, board of directors).

June 15: MEA-MFT state officer terms begin.

Sept. 1, 2000: NEA and AFT officially recognize MEA-MFT merger.