

By the time you read this...

By the time you read this, we should have a good idea if we and others have after a lot of nagging, hard work qualified I-151 for the November general election. As you know, if adopted by the voters, I-151 will increase the Montana minimum wage \$1 to \$6.15—the first increase in the minimum wage in a decade! I-151 will further provide an annual cost of living adjustment.

Some 30,000 Montanans work at minimum wage. They have earned our minimal help.

My personal thanks to everyone who collected and verified the necessary signatures. (And for those who did not help, may you never have to live on a minimum wage.)

Don't Sink Our State: CI-97

By the time you read this, we will be close to knowing if CI-97, the latest outrageous radical right wing assault on publicly funded institutions, including public schools, has also qualified for the November general ballot.

CI-97 would embed in our constitution a brainless, foolish, mean-spirited cap on state expenditures even when revenues are available.

CI-97 would compromise our state's ongoing opportunity and duty to serve all our citizens—especially those who can least serve themselves.

If CI-97 qualifies for the ballot, then it will once again be our moment to wrestle with the libertarian yahoos who reject representative democracy, trash good government, and disdain social compact and the common good.

Bernie Olson: still a hero

By the time you read this, you already know that Republican Representative Bernie Olson lost his bid for his party's nomination and consequent reelection to the state legislature.

Bernie is a retired Kalispell teacher and continues to hold MEA-MFT membership. He is a man of character, courage, conscience, and integrity. Bernie knows how to vote right and let the chips fall where they may.

In the last legislative session he was twice a hero. When the stakes are high and the risks great, most legislators rarely rise to the occasion even once in their political careers. Bernie rose twice in one

session on behalf of state employees and public schools.

We will definitely miss Representative Olson in 2007.

Bernie's loss is a huge defeat for moderate Republican legislators everywhere. The right wing-dominated R-Party has sent its message loud and clear. Vote your conscience. Do the right thing by those who serve our state and our school children and you will pay a political price.

Bernie paid the price. But he can and will live easily with the consequences and himself.

By the time you read this, incumbent Republican U. S. Senator Conrad Burns will know for sure that he is in the toughest political fight of his career.

My prediction? Democrat challenger Jon Tester will win this race so long as he remains the smart, self-confident, approachable, big-grinned, flat-topped, down-dressed, down-home, made-in-Montana wheat farmer that he is right now... and so long as he speaks to the issues that he knows and we know really matter.

No down time for us

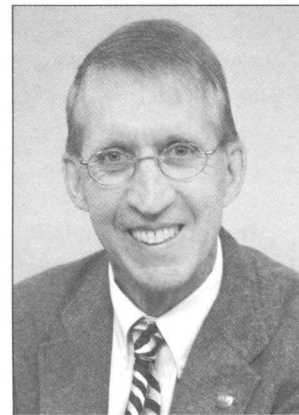
By the time you read this, MEA-MFT will have a new vice president and seven new directors. They join an ongoing dynamic cadre of 35 officers and directors representing state employees, Head Start, higher education, private health care workers, and k-12 teachers and classifieds.

Our union continues to grow in size, responsibility, and accountability to all our members who live and work everywhere in Montana. Take a moment, click on www.mea-mft.org. Check out who we are and what we do. You'll see.

By the time you read this, we will be well into state and national conferences, board of director meetings, membership recruitment, new unit organizing, unsettled contract negotiations, grievance arbitrations, professional development, and the November general election.

There is no down time at MEA-MFT.

Have a great summer. ■



BY ERIC FEAVER
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