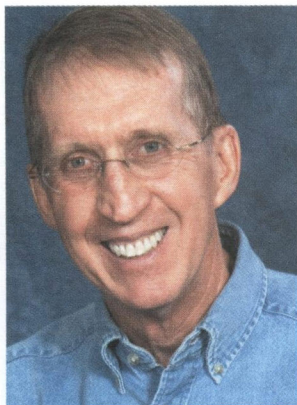


## And you missed it!



BY ERIC FEAYER  
MEA-MFT PRESIDENT

**M**arch 26-27, 240 active, retired, and student member/delegates from all over Montana drove to Billings and participated in our 10<sup>th</sup> annual (and anniversary) Representative Assembly. State employees, Head Start instructors, k-12 teachers and classifieds, university faculty, private health care workers jumped into action together.

From every account we have received, this was a GREAT Representative Assembly.

**One delegate wrote:** “Thank you so much for an excellent Representative Assembly. It was my first; it will not be my last. I went tired, discouraged with local negotiations, ambivalent with how recruiting new members has gone, not hopeful that I/we could make a difference. I came home with energy, enthusiasm, & new ideas to try, a great AFT shirt [Work that Matters] which I’m wearing today, & a renewed commitment with a ‘Yes, we can!’ attitude....I am proud to be a member of MEA-MFT. My father, who was president of the Machinist Union in Butte a century ago, would have loved it as well.”

**Another stated:** “Just wanted to let you know that I found the Rep. Assembly to be really interesting and actually invigorating! The first one I went to was in Missoula, the first year that we formed a classified union, and I remember not really understanding what was going on. So, to now attend a few years later with much more union experience under my belt, I really felt like I was a part of things.”

**A third shared:** “I was thinking about how much I enjoyed RA last week and had to let you know. I don’t think I’ve ever gotten so much ‘good feeling’ out of an RA. Thanks.”

Plainly summarized, this was an RA that no member/leader should have missed.

In addition to the normal conduct of business—specifically the adoption of dues and budget for our next fiscal year—delegates carefully debated the constitutional rights of our retired members and the proposed construct of an ad hoc committee to study the status of

all MEA-MFT membership groups. Both issues ended in relatively uncommon roll call votes. Yeah, this was exciting. If you weren’t there, you missed it.

And you missed tremendous speeches by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and State Superintendent Denise Juneau.

And you missed one of the most inspirational evenings ever when we honored Lynn Witts as our newest ESP of the Year and Mike Kupilik and Jill Cohenour as our first ever Faculty and Public Employee Members of the Year respectively.

And you missed the motion delegates adopted opposing CI-105, a ballot issue currently being circulated across Montana that would embed in our constitution a silly prohibition against a realty transfer tax—a tax that doesn’t even exist. CI-105 is at root an anti-government constitutional proposition. If offered a petition qualifying CI-105 for the November ballot, please don’t sign!

And you missed two other motions delegates adopted supporting ballot issues that would create and fund comprehensive drug and alcohol prevention programs and end grossly abusive, usurious payday loans now brazenly and unconsciously legal in Montana.

In short, if you weren’t there, you missed it. Bottom line, down significantly from recent years, only 71 local affiliates sent delegates to our RA! NOT good enough. Every local, regardless of size, is entitled to at least one delegate. If every local sent only one delegate we would have had 50 more delegates than actually participated in this very excellent Representative Assembly.

### **You can see where this is going.**

All of us are MEA-MFT. All of us should be eager to gather when and where we meet. All of us should want to own, directly purchase, in our democratic way the policies, programs, and services our union provides.

**Don’t miss the next one, April 1-2, 2011, Helena. ■**