

MEA-MFT Constitution

As amended – April 1, 2016 - MEA-MFT Representative Assembly

1. NAME

There shall be an organization of members and local affiliates working in public and private schools; state, county, and local government; and public and private health care, called MEA-MFT.

2. ORIGIN

For all purposes, MEA-MFT shall be a continuation and successor of the Montana Education Association and Montana Federation of Teachers merged into a single organization.

3. AFFILIATION

A. National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers

1. MEA-MFT shall be affiliated with the NEA and AFT.
2. MEA-MFT's constitution shall be consistent with NEA and AFT governing documents.

B. American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations

1. MEA-MFT shall be affiliated with the AFL-CIO.
2. Local affiliates shall be affiliated with the AFL-CIO through MEA-MFT.

C. Local Affiliates

Each local affiliate shall adopt governing documents consistent with this constitution and comply with standards of affiliation the representative assembly may adopt.

4. COMPLIANCE

If any provision of this constitution, in part or in whole, is found to be in violation of federal or state law or NEA and AFT governing documents, it shall be amended to ensure compliance at the next meeting of the representative assembly.

5. PURPOSE

MEA-MFT shall represent and advocate for members and local affiliates and serve the students, clients, public schools, and institutions in which members work.

6. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Pursuant to federal and state law and NEA and AFT governing documents, MEA-MFT shall adopt appropriate measures to provide minority, gender, member, and local affiliate balance in governance, program, and staff.

7. MEMBERSHIP

A. Categories

Membership shall consist of active, retired, substitute teacher, student, staff, and associate members.

1. Active membership shall be open to employees eligible for bargaining unit status to include:
 - a. Pre K-12 public and private school certified and classified personnel.
 - b. Public and private postsecondary school professional and support personnel.
 - c. State, county, and municipal employees.
 - d. Public and private health care employees.
 - e. People who have been granted active life membership status in the Montana Education Association and Montana Federation of Teachers as of August 31, 1997.
2. Membership in MEA-MFT Retired shall be open to former active members who have retired from active membership eligibility.
3. Substitute teacher membership shall be open to persons who are substitute teaching and NOT eligible for active membership.
4. Student membership shall be open to persons enrolled in accredited colleges or universities who are not eligible for active membership.
5. Staff membership shall be open to staff employees.

6. Associate membership shall be open to persons who fit no other membership category.

B. Membership Year

The membership year shall be September 1 through August 31.

C. Continuing Membership

Membership shall be continuous from year to year unless revoked in writing during the annual termination period.

D. Unified Membership

Membership shall be unified - local, state, and national affiliates.

E. Governance Rights

1. Active members shall have full governance rights including the right to vote and run for local, district, and state offices.
2. Retired members may be nominated and elected from their membership to serve as directors to the board of directors and delegates to the representative assembly.
3. Student members may be nominated and elected from their membership to serve as delegates to the representative assembly.
4. Staff, substitute, and associate members shall have no governance rights.

8. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year shall be September 1 - August 31.

9. DUES AND ASSESSMENTS

A. Representative Assembly

1. The representative assembly shall establish dues for membership categories.
2. The representative assembly may require special assessments.
3. a. Proposed changes in dues shall be presented in writing to the president at least 60 calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.
b. The president shall notify members and local affiliates of proposed changes in dues at least 30

calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.

B. Board of Directors

The board of directors shall determine how dues are collected and disbursed.

C. National Affiliate Dues

MEA-MFT shall transmit national affiliate dues to NEA and AFT.

D. Individual Member Responsibility

Payment of local affiliate, MEA-MFT, and national affiliate dues and fees is an individual member responsibility.

E. State Assumption of Dues Collection

1. In the event a local affiliate is unable or unwilling to accurately and completely collect state and national affiliate dues and/or representation fees and submit those dues and fees to MEA-MFT, MEA-MFT shall assume administrative control of that affiliate and collect all local, state, and national affiliate dues and fees and rebate local dues and fees back to the local affiliate.
2. A local affiliate may at any time request that MEA-MFT assume all dues and fees collection responsibilities.

10. STATE OFFICERS

A. Positions

State officers shall be president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, and NEA director.

B. Terms

Except for the NEA director, state officers shall serve two-year terms beginning June 15 in even-numbered years.

C. Limitations

1. State officers shall not simultaneously hold other state offices in MEA-MFT.
2. The president shall not simultaneously hold any district or local affiliate office in MEA-MFT.

D. Eligibility

1. Candidates for state president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, and NEA director shall be active members.
2. The president is an active member by definition.

E. Elections

State officers shall be elected at and by the representative assembly.

F. Duties

1. President

- a. Serve as the full-time chief governance officer of MEA-MFT.
- b. Serve as chief spokesperson on matters of governance, program, and policy.
- c. Supervise, evaluate, and direct management.
- d. Serve on and preside over meetings of the board of directors and representative assembly.
- e. Prepare the agenda for meetings of the board of directors and representative assembly.
- f. Review policies, positions, programs, dues, and budget and make recommendations to the appropriate governance entity.
- g. Sign contracts and other instruments connected with the business, legal, and professional affairs of MEA-MFT.

H. Transmit MEA-MFT dues to the AFL-CIO.

- i. Appoint chairpersons and members of committees.
- j. Serve ex-officio without vote on committees.
- k. Publish MEA-MFT publications.
- l. Serve as a delegate to NEA and AFT representative assemblies.
- m. Perform duties as stipulated in the constitution, delegated by governing bodies, and as are customarily assumed by the chief governance officer.
- n. Delegate duties to other officers and management.

o. Report on a regular basis to the board of directors.

p. Serve as alternate NEA director.

2. Vice President

- a. Preside in the absence of the president or when the president is unable to perform the duties of the office.
- b. Succeed to the presidency should a vacancy occur and serve the unexpired term.
- c. Serve as a delegate to the NEA representative assembly.
- d. Serve as alternate NEA director.
- e. Serve as vice chair of the board of directors and delegate to the representative assembly.
- f. Accept duties as may be assigned by the president.

3. Secretary-Treasurer

- a. Serve as treasurer of MEA-MFT.
- b. Serve as a delegate to the NEA representative assembly.
- c. Serve as alternate NEA director.
- d. Accept duties as may be assigned by the president.

4. NEA Director

- a. Serve a term of office consistent with NEA governing documents.
- b. Serve as a member of the board of directors and delegate to the representative assembly.
- c. Accept duties as may be assigned by the president.

G. Unresolved Vacancy

Should a vacancy occur in a state office or the directorship-at-large to which there is no designated successor, the board of directors may elect a successor to fulfill the unexpired term.

H. Nominations and Elections

State officer nominations and elections shall be conducted according to the standing rules of the representative assembly.

11. DISTRICTS

A. Organization

1. Subject to the approval of the representative assembly, the board of directors shall organize members and local affiliates into districts that best reflect Montana's expansive geography and related membership categories.
2. Subject to the approval of the representative assembly, the board of directors may dissolve or reorganize districts.
3. Districts shall be numbered consecutively.
4. Pre k-12 certified and Head Start local affiliates shall be organized into nine (9) geographic districts.
5. Pre k-higher education classified, higher education faculty and graduate assistants, state/city/county local affiliates, and MEA-MFT Retired shall be organized into eight (8) statewide districts.

B. Governance and Duties

1. Each district shall be governed by a district council.

2. Officers and Directors

- a. Each district shall elect a district chair who shall preside over district council meetings and serve as the district director to the board of directors and delegate to the representative assembly.
- b. Each district shall elect a district vice chair who shall preside over district council meetings in the absence of the chair, succeed to the chair should a vacancy occur, serve as the district alternate director to the board of directors and alternate delegate to the representative assembly.
- c. Odd-numbered districts shall elect chairs and vice chairs in odd-numbered years at the representative assembly. Even-numbered districts shall elect in even-numbered years at the representative assembly.
- d. District chairs and vice chairs shall not live and work in the same community.
- e. District chairs and vice chairs shall serve two-year terms beginning June 15.
- f. Nominations and elections of district chairs and vice chairs shall be open to members of the district.

3. Vote

- a. The chair and vice chair of a district council shall have 1 vote each.
- b. Regardless of the number of delegates, each local affiliate properly credentialed at the district council shall cast as many votes as it has members, apportioned among delegates present.
- c. The chair, vice chair, and local affiliate delegates must be present to vote.

4. Meetings

In addition to district caucuses at the representative assembly, district councils shall meet at least 2 times annually at a time and place established by the councils.

5. Vacancies

- a. Should a district chair resign or be absent without notice from two consecutive district meetings or two consecutive board of director meetings, that position shall be declared vacant and the vice chair shall become chair. The district council shall name a successor vice chair to serve the unexpired term.
- b. Should a district vice chair resign or be absent without notice from two consecutive district meetings, that position shall be declared vacant. The district council shall name a successor vice chair to serve the unexpired term.
- c. In the event the district chair and vice chair positions are both vacated, then upon approval of the board of directors, for purposes of elections of new officers, the president shall name an acting chair and vice chair from that district to convene the district council within thirty days or at the next representative assembly whichever comes first.

6. Duties

- a. Preview and review actions of the board of directors and representative assembly.
- b. Make recommendations to the board of directors and representative assembly.
- c. Nominate members to serve on committees.
- d. Provide member training programs.

e. Serve as an information conduit to and from local affiliates to the board of directors and representative assembly.

12. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. Composition

1. The board of directors shall be composed of state officers, district directors, and 1 director-at-large.
2. The director-at-large shall be elected by the representative assembly to a two-year term beginning June 15 in even-numbered years.

B. Duties

1. Implement the actions of the representative assembly.
2. Make recommendations to the representative assembly.
3. Give directions to the president.
4. As approved by the representative assembly, create, dissolve, or reorganize districts.
5. Prepare a budget for the consideration of the representative assembly.
6. Determine how dues are collected and disbursed.
7. Direct the financial affairs of MEA-MFT.
8. Employ management staff and approve contracts with the same.
9. Negotiate with organized staff and ratify contracts with the same.
10. Adopt policies, positions, and programs.
11. May elect successors to vacancies in state offices or the directorship-at-large.
12. Hear and attempt to resolve member, local, and district disputes.
13. Create and dissolve committees.
14. Accept duties as may be assigned by the president.

C. Vote

1. State officers and the director-at-large shall have 1 vote each.

2. District directors shall have a vote weighted to reflect the number of members each director represents.

3. The total number of weighted votes shall equal the number of directors not counting state officers and director-at-large.

4. State officers and directors must be present to vote.

D. Meetings

1. The board of directors shall meet 3 times annually at a time and place established by the president.
2. The president or a majority of the board of directors may convene a special meeting of the board of directors.

13. REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

A. Composition

1. The representative assembly shall be composed of state officers, directors to the board of directors, and delegates representing local affiliates, retired, and student members.

2. Local Affiliate Delegates

- a. Local affiliate delegates shall be nominated and elected by and from the membership of their locals.
- b. Each local affiliate shall elect at least 1 delegate.

c. Each local affiliate having more than 25 members shall elect additional delegates on the basis of 1 delegate for each additional 25 members or major fraction thereof.

3. Retired and Student Delegates

Retired and student members shall elect delegates by and from their memberships on the basis of 1 delegate for each 25 members or major fraction thereof.

B. Duties

1. Amend this constitution.
2. Serve as the final authority in governance matters.
3. Elect state officers.

4. Elect the director-at-large to the board of directors.
5. Adopt policies, positions, and programs.
6. Adopt the budget.
7. Establish dues and assessments for membership categories.
8. Establish standards of local affiliation.
9. Approve creation, reorganization, or dissolution of districts.
10. Create and dissolve committees.
11. Hear and resolve member, local affiliate, and district disputes.

C. Vote

1. State officers, directors, and student delegates shall have 1 vote each.
2. Regardless of the number of elected delegates, each local affiliate properly credentialed at the representative assembly shall cast as many votes as it has members, apportioned among delegates present.
3. Delegates must be present to vote.

D. Meetings

1. The representative assembly shall meet annually at a time and place established by the board of directors.
2. Upon at least 30 calendar days' notice to members and local affiliates, the board of directors may convene a special representative assembly.

14. COMMITTEES

A. Creation

The president, board of directors and representative assembly may create committees to advise MEA-MFT on policies, positions, and programs.

B. Accountability

Committees are accountable to the president and governance entity that creates them.

15. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

A. Board of Directors

Should a dispute arise over the interpretation of this constitution, implementation of a representative assembly action, or election of a state officer, a member, local affiliate, or district may seek resolution at the next meeting of the board of directors.

B. Representative Assembly

If not satisfied at the board of directors, the member, local affiliate, or district may seek resolution at the next meeting of the representative assembly.

C. National Affiliates

If not satisfied at the representative assembly, the member, local affiliate, or district council may seek resolution from a **national affiliate**.

16. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

A. Self-Governance

Local affiliates, districts, board of directors, and representative assembly shall adopt rules of procedure consistent with this constitution and national affiliate governing documents.

B. Roberts' Rules of Order -- Latest Edition

In the absence of adopted rules of procedure, Roberts' Rules of Order -- Latest Edition shall govern governance meetings.

17. AMENDMENTS

A. The representative assembly may amend this constitution by a 2/3rds vote.

B. A member, local affiliate, district, or board of directors may propose amendments.

C. Proposed amendments shall be presented in writing to the president at least 60 calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.

D. The president shall notify members and local affiliates of proposed amendments at least 30 calendar days before the next meeting of the representative assembly.