

MiARA February Newsletter

Important Biannual Convention Scheduled For March 31, 2016

The 2016 Biannual Convention is to be held on Thursday, March 31, 2016, at UAW Region 1, 27800 George Merrelli Dr. Because of a full agenda, which includes voting for officers, the meeting will begin at 11:00 am. Registration starts at 10:00 am.

Delegates and attendees are to be briefed on state and federal legislation influencing retirement security. In addition, they will be informed on actions MiARA members need to take to support or oppose such legislation.

Attendees will hear from several renowned speakers about issues important to retirees.

The Biannual Convention includes general elections for the top five officers of MiARA: President, Executive Vice-President, First Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

The MiARA Nominations Committee will present a slate. Nominations will be taken from the floor, also. Each registered delegate will have one vote.

Information and Registration Forms are attached to this newsletter. In addition, you will find a description of MiARA officer's jobs, instructions for officer nominations and an official Nomination Form.

Governor Snyder Signs Bill To Eliminate Straight Party Voting Option

Snyder and the Republican Controlled
Legislature Choose to make voting
more difficult in Michigan.

Republican legislators passed a Bill, which Governor Snyder signed into law that eliminated Straight Party voting in Michigan.



Opposition to the elimination of Straight Party voting has not only come from the Democrats, but from such groups as the League of Women Voters and Common Cause.

Many city and township clerks have objected to the elimination of Straight Ticket voting because they will need to hire and train extra election workers to handle the longer lines that will be a result of the new law.

Be prepared for longer lines and a longer wait when you vote in the November election.

Michigan Education Association President Steve Cook Writes about Restoring Infrastructure and Local Rule

The following article by Steve Cook first appeared in the February 16, 2016, Detroit News.

While Michigan citizens, and indeed the entire nation, have been focused on the lead poisoned water and children in Flint, it is important to look at the root of this tragic crisis.

In his State of The Union address, Governor Rick Snyder said to the people of Flint, “Government at all levels failed you.” However, a more accurate statement would have been, “Bad policies failed you.”

Snyder came into office touting himself as “one tough nerd,” promising to use his business experience to make government more efficient and effective. His widespread use of emergency managers in cities and schools across the state was his attempt to employ that business philosophy in dealing with financial problems plaguing those entities.

Unfortunately, by taking power away from democratically elected leadership in those communities, he took away the voices of those who are most invested and who care the most about fixing the problems in their communities. One tough nerd ended up being the toughest on the children of Flint.

But the effect of emergency managers and bad policy choices doesn’t end in that community. State appointed emergency managers have been in charge of Detroit Public Schools for years.

The result: the financial-condition of DPS is worse today than it was seven years ago. The state-mandated Education Achievement Authority – a network of for-profit charter schools to replace

some struggling schools in Detroit – has failed miserably, showing poor academic results and corruption.

We are seeing the results of state government neglect for public education: mold, rodents, peeling paint, broken water fountains, buckling floors and excessive temperatures in overcrowded classrooms. Detroit teachers have spoken out and taken action to expose these tragic teaching and learning situations.



MEA President Steve Cook and MEA-Retired President Judy Foster talk about “The State of the Union.”

These situations expose a larger problem in our state government. One-party control has led to legislation continually thwarting the democratic process and silencing the collective voices of Michigan citizens. The so-called “Right-to-Work” law was the first example. Then came the widespread use of emergency managers and more recently the elimination of straight-ticket voting.

The arrogance of the legislature to stifle the democratic process is clear when they add token appropriations to bills like right- to-work and straight ticket voting to prevent citizen repeal of these laws. The peak of that arrogance was when shortly after voters went to the polls and repealed the emergency manager law, the Legislature passed a new version with a token appropriation and Snyder promptly signed it into law. That is not what democracy looks like.

Clearly, the first order of business is to fix the infrastructure that led to lead-poisoned water in Flint and repair the dangerous conditions in DPS buildings. These problems need to be addressed now. But our task in the long run is to fix the broken government that led to these bad policy choices.

As union members, we know the answer; collective action – in cities, in schools and in the voting booth. MEA members across the state stand with the citizens of Flint and other cities who have been disenfranchised by emergency managers. And we stand with our brothers and sisters in the Detroit Federation of Teachers in their fight to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for their students.

The Detroit News publishes LABOR VOICES on a rotating basis by United Auto Workers President Dennis Williams, Teamsters President James Hoffa, Michigan AFT-CIO President Ron Bieber, and Michigan Education Association President Steve Cook.

Be Sure to Vote For your Candidate In the March Primary

Whether Democrat, Republican or other, MiARA members are reminded to vote in the March 8, 2016, Michigan Primary.

The Michigan Department of State Bureau of Elections has comprehensive voter information on their web site. Here are a few facts that voters might find helpful. Go to the web for more complete information.

THE POLLING HOURS ARE FROM 7:00 a.m.
THROUGH 8:p.m.

To participate in the presidential primary, you must select from three ballot choices.

If your city or township is NOT conducting a special election in conjunction with the

presidential primary, two ballot choices are available. You may choose a ballot which lists the Republican Party candidates or a ballot which lists the Democratic Party candidates.

If your city or township is conducting any type of special election in conjunction with the presidential primary, you have three choices: 1. A ballot that lists the Republican Party candidates and items for the special election. 2. A ballot that lists the Democratic Party candidates and items for the special election. 3. A ballot which contains only the proposals and/or offices related to the special election. This choice is for voters who do not wish to participate in the Presidential Primary, but wish to participate in the general election. Instructions for casting a write-in vote are available from the election workers.

For more information, see the Bureau's website at www.michigan.gov/elections.

MiARA Executive Board

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(AFSCME)

Judy Foster, 1st Vice-President (MEA)

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