



MCEA...Our Most Important Job Is Yours!

AFFILIATION Q's & A's

Questions and Answers Regarding the MCEA Board Recommendation in Support of AFT Affiliation

Why did the MCEA Board of Directors decide that now is the right time to affiliate with a national organization?

- MCEA, along with the state of public employment in Maryland, has gone through dramatic changes over the past 20 years that require us to reevaluate our operation and act to preserve the strength and vitality of MCEA.
- Most other independent state employee organizations chose to affiliate long ago, and the landscape is now dominated by large, aggressive organizations.
- Like other employee organizations, we have dealt with a loss of membership; we tried, independently, to build back membership to numbers we have enjoyed in the past, but that has not happened due to, among several reasons, our lack of resources as an independent organization.
- With the benefit of more than a year of research and analysis, we examined our options and came up with what we believe is the best way to build a stronger future for MCEA.

How did the Board come to a decision to recommend AFT affiliation?

- The officers and members of the MCEA Board of Directors went through a lengthy determination of MCEA needs for the future and evaluated competing proposals from many different national unions representing public employees.
- After more than a year of research, interviews, discussions and analysis, the Board voted overwhelmingly to recommend affiliation with the AFT.
- The Board made the judgment that AFT was

in the best position to help maintain MCEA's status as a premier public employee union in Maryland while providing resources and assistance for future growth.

- The Board felt that, ultimately, the AFT was the best fit for MCEA's membership, its history and its vision for the future.

What does "affiliation" mean?

- Affiliation is when two organizations enter into a lasting formal relationship as equals that preserves their individual identity and autonomy while creating an organizational critical mass more powerful than the sum of its parts.
- An affiliation is not a "merger," where an organization gives up its autonomy and identity by folding into something larger or new.
- What the MCEA Board of Directors endorses is an affiliation, not a merger, between MCEA and AFT/AFT Maryland.

1. *Why an MCEA/AFT affiliation?*

- To preserve, strengthen, and grow MCEA as a powerful organizational voice for Maryland public employees
- To unite the strength of MCEA and AFT to magnify the voice and strength of current and future members at every level of state and local government
- To expand collective bargaining rights and membership in MCEA to unorganized state, local government, and higher education employees throughout Maryland

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2. How will affiliation affect MCEA's autonomy and identity?

Affiliation will strengthen MCEA's position as an autonomous organization for Maryland public employees by helping to stabilize its finances, eliminating the threat of hostile raids, and providing substantial new resources for stabilizing operations and growing the membership through new organizing.

As an autonomous affiliate of the AFT and AFT Maryland, MCEA will

- Be chartered as a statewide local union of the AFT, with jurisdiction covering all current MCEA members wherever they are currently situated, including state employees in units covered by collective bargaining, state employees not covered by collective bargaining, county and local government employees, higher education staff and retirees.
- Exercise complete autonomy, authority and control over organizational governance, staff, collective bargaining agreements, policies and procedures, property and assets, finances, real estate, trademarks, contracts, and investments
- Enjoy AFT and AFL-CIO protection against raids by outside unions
- Retain the absolute right to hire, fire and direct staff and to contract with attorneys, lobbyists, accountants, consultants, and

insurance and benefits providers of its choosing

- Have the right to continue to enjoy participation in R.K. Tongue insurance and optional member benefits programs
- Enhance the strength of MCEA retiree programs by joining with the national AFT retiree program and other senior coalitions.
- Have the right to endorse, or refrain from endorsing, candidates for political office.

3. What are each organization's responsibilities, rights, and obligations under affiliation?

- AFT/AFT Maryland must respect MCEA's right to self-governance and self-management
- MCEA assumes the rights and responsibilities as an affiliate of AFT and AFT Maryland on the same basis as all other affiliates
- MCEA members in Maryland State Government units E and G at the time of affiliation will be shielded from having to pay dual dues in the event that fair share is enacted, for as long as they remain members in good standing of MCEA and remain current in payment of MCEA dues
- AFT/AFT Maryland pledge their best efforts to seek accommodations with regard to fair share payment exemptions, in full or in part, for current MCEA members – for as long as they



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remain members in good standing – in Maryland state government units where another AFL-CIO union is the exclusive representative

- MCEA's Constitution and Bylaws shall at all times be consistent with the constitutions and bylaws of AFT and AFT Maryland
- MCEA members will be eligible for coverage under AFT's occupational liability insurance and legal defense programs
- AFT/AFT Maryland pledge to provide –without additional cost on the same basis as provided to all other AFT affiliates– the following services as requested and appropriate: Economic and budget research for collective bargaining, legislative and political outreach, occupational safety and health expertise, information technology and electronic data support, stewards and activist training, strategic research for political/legislative and contract/organizing campaigns, public relations and communications, community and political mobilization, and pre-retirement and retiree programs
- AFT pledges to work with MCEA leadership and staff to establish and provide resources for an organizing program to increase MCEA's membership in units where MCEA is the exclusive representative and to help MCEA win representation rights in unrepresented units

- AFT pledges to defend MCEA against raids in violation of AFL-CIO rules by any outside union
- MCEA agrees to pay per-capita to AFT, AFT Maryland, the Maryland State AFL-CIO and appropriate central bodies on the same basis as all other AFT affiliates in Maryland, except as described below.

4. *What are the financial responsibilities of affiliation?*

As with any affiliate of the AFT, MCEA will be subject to all the benefits of and responsibilities of membership, including payment of appropriate AFT/AFT Maryland and AFL-CIO state and central body per-capita. AFT will absorb the full cost of national AFL-CIO per capita for all MCEA members.

With regard to AFT/AFT Maryland per capita, the first four years of affiliation will be a phase-in period. MCEA will negotiate a phase-in schedule that is least burdensome and most advantageous to current members. A reasonable monthly formulation would be 0 during the first six months, 10% during the second six months, 20% during the second year, 40% during the third year, 60% during the fourth year. To the extent possible, MCEA will attempt to meet the initial per-capita obligations through current income or savings.



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At the start of the fifth year, and thereafter, MCEA would be obligated to pay full per capita. Currently, the full per capita rates are as follow: AFT -- Sixteen dollars per member per month (except that the amount for members earning less than a starting teacher's salary will be 1/2 the full per capita rate, and employees earning less than twelve thousand dollars will pay 1/4 the regular rate. AFT Maryland – Ten dollars twenty-five cents per member per month (except that locals with more than five thousand members pay at the full per capita rate only on the first five thousand members and then at the 1/2 rate for all members beyond five thousand).

No per-capita will be charged for MCEA retiree members.

5. Are there financial offsets, rebates, financial arrangements or subsidies for which MCEA would be eligible during and after the first four years of affiliation?

Yes.

- MCEA would be entitled to tap into the AFT Legal Defense Fund, which reimburses a portion of the cost of legal fees in connection with defending the employment rights of MCEA members
- AFT's special formula assistance program would rebate \$360 a month to MCEA for

- every 1200 full time equivalent members
- Immediately upon affiliation MCEA and AFT/AFT Maryland will cooperate to develop an organizing plan to win units of unrepresented employees among supervisory state employees, higher education, and local government. These will be cooperative programs with AFT providing the major share of funding, as well as personnel and other resources
- MCEA will be eligible to draw on the AFT Solidarity Fund, on the same basis as other affiliates, to finance legislative and political efforts designed to protect and advance the interests of MCEA members and the services they provide to the public
- MCEA and AFT will explore the possibility of AFT renting excess space from MCEA in Annapolis and elsewhere throughout the state in connection with organizing, political, and legislative programs.

6. What kinds of organizational assistance can we expect to receive from AFT/AFT Maryland as part of the affiliation agreement?

- MCEA and AFT/AFT Maryland will develop a multi-year organizing project for the purpose of organizing unorganized workers in state government, higher education, and local government. AFT, AFT Maryland, and MCEA will fund this project through contributions of cash and in-kind services, with AFT to provide the



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bulk of the cash contribution. Elements of such a project may include resources for hiring full and part time organizers, state and local government legislative and political advocacy, communications and public relations, economic and strategic research, training, professional and workplace issues, and any other mutually agreed upon programs or services necessary for achieving the project's objectives.

- During the first four years of affiliation, MCEA would seek to secure financial assistance for the purpose of sending a number of elected MCEA leaders to the following various AFT programs and conferences such as the AFT Collective Bargaining Conference, AFT Public Employee Conference, and others as jointly approved
- MCEA will seek AFT's assistance in the design and development of an electronic data base, including programming and training
- MCEA will negotiate AFT support to send MCEA leaders and staff to various AFT training programs. MCEA will seek to obtain agreement for AFT to bear the expense of such training, which may take place at MCEA locations, at or near the worksite, at AFT MD facilities, at AFT HQ, or at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, MD.

make us stronger to fight service fees, try for access to buildings so we can have MCEA Days, and go to health fairs and orientations of new members? Some members think there is only one union.

The major reason for affiliating with AFT/ AFT Maryland is to preserve and grow MCEA. Under current conditions, absent affiliation, MCEA will either have to raise dues enormously very soon simply to stay where we are or look into the possibility of closing down offices, cutting services, and reducing personnel. Affiliation will provide additional resources immediately that will enable MCEA to grow in numbers and revenues by signing up new members in organized units, retaining current members in state units E and G by shielding them from service fees, opening the door to discussions for shielding current members for service fees in AFSCME-represented units, and offering economies of scale that will allow MCEA to continue to provide the levels of resources and services our members are accustomed to enjoying from their organization. As we organize new units in higher education, county and local governments, and among state-employed supervisors, opportunities will increase for conducting MCEA Days, health fairs, orientations and other worksite events for celebrating MCEA and attracting and orienting new members.

7. What can AFT/AFT Maryland do for us to



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8. *What about dues? How will they work for active members and retirees?*

Dues will continue to be set by MCEA, as always, according to our own internal processes. How AFT per capita is folded into MCEA's dues formula is up to us. We decide whether dues will be set at a dollar amount, on a percentage basis, or according to some other formula. Dues for retirees will be unaffected by the affiliation. AFT/AFT/Maryland affiliation adds no cost whatever to the amount of dues paid by retirees.

9. *Will AFT allow MCEA to retain its current reps? Will our dues be increased in the next 3 to 5 years?*

The situation we face is not if MCEA will require a dues increase, but if and how we can preserve and grow the MCEA as a powerful organization for state and local government workers and retirees. If we don't raise dues we are looking at making serious decisions over the next 3 to 5 years with regard to the number of offices we keep open, the size our staff, and the level and quality of representational services we are able to provide to all MCEA members. Affiliation with AFT/AFT Maryland will allow us to phase up our dues much more gradually over the next 3 to 5 years rather than all at once right away. In other words, the services and resources provided by AFT/AFT Maryland in the form of dues rebates and special organizing project assistance will allow MCEA the financial

breathing room we need to preserve our current level of services while aggressively pursuing new opportunities for growth. To the extent possible, we will cushion the financial impact on MCEA members by negotiating a modest gradual phase-in schedule over four years and where possible reducing the initial costs through the application of savings and economies of scale realized through the affiliation.

The affiliation will not interfere in any way with MCEA's hiring and firing decisions, or direction and retention of current reps. Personnel decisions will remain MCEA's and MCEA's alone.

10. *What if things don't work out?*

While the affiliation is intended to be permanent, the affiliation agreement will include an opt-out provision whereby MCEA could decide to opt out of the affiliation at some point within the first four years.



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