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Delegates Vote to Strengthen MCEA Through AFT Affiliation

By an overwhelming margin of 374 to 12, delegates attending the July 24, 2010 MCEA special convention voted to confirm the MCEA Board of Directors' recommendation to affiliate with the American Federation of Teachers. AFT is a nationwide union representing more than 1.5 million public employee members. Convening at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum, Maryland, MCEA delegates from across the state heard detailed presentations on all aspects of the proposed affiliation. Questions, comments and debate centered on the future of MCEA and its diverse statewide membership. The special convention on affiliation took place after more than a year of research on potential affiliation partners that included consideration of a wide array of national unions.

MCEA Executive Director, David Boschert, spoke out at the meeting explaining, "We have to move forward in the coming years with programs for organizing, growth and communications that improve our representation of Maryland's public employees. Our partnership with the AFT can help us to achieve these goals. This is an affiliation that makes sense for both the MCEA and the AFT."

MCEA Board Member and Area Governor, Tamara Byrd, pointed out to the convention delegates that, "We looked carefully at the programs and services available from many different unions and were most impressed with what we saw at the AFT. This is clearly the best fit for us. I'm excited and thrilled about this affiliation, and I know it can help activate and energize our activists across the state. We also need to be involved in the challenges that face public employees across the country. We need to be part of a national union."

AFT's Director for Public Employees, Steve Porter, who attended the convention and spoke to the convention delegates, hailed the vote as a "Great opportunity for MCEA, for the AFT, and for public employees throughout Maryland. Together, we can bring more effective representation to state employees, higher education employees, and to county and municipal employees. We look forward to working with the MCEA leadership and staff to build programs that involve members in the growth and development of their union. Our partnership can add value and resources to help make this happen."

Dr. Lorretta Johnson, Executive Vice President of the AFT and Former President of AFT Maryland, was excited by the news of the affiliation vote. "This is an historic vote. It will open doors for cooperation and growth that I always knew were possible. We intend to take full advantage of the opportunity. MCEA leaders and convention delegates will look back with pride on the decision they have made to affiliate with the AFT. This is a great day," she exclaimed.

MCEA President, Steve Schaefer, reflected on the eventful day that also included the birth of his new grandson at 12:37 a.m. that morning. "I am exhausted and tired, but I couldn't be more pleased. This is a wonderful day for my family at home and for my MCEA family. I watched the birth of my new grandson and the birth of a great new partnership. Both have a brilliant future ahead."

More information about MCEA is available at www.mcea.org. For additional information, please call Vanessa DiDomenico (MCEA Communications Director) at 1-888-611 MCEA, Ext. 211.

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