

# PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION

## 2010 Delegate Assembly Report

MSEA's thirtieth year has been a productive year. As you can see in your DA books, the Board has completed a 3-year strategic plan and a plan with goals for the next 10 years. Financially we have been able to maintain a good fund balance and reserve. We negotiated with the Executive Director and she has agreed to a 2-year contract extension. We have added a new Field Rep who lives in southern Minnesota, which helps us start towards our goal of having Field Reps assigned and living within the regions they're assigned. We had a very successful MSEA Day on the Hill and provided an excellent fall training and summer leadership training for you the members.

This year's State of the Union, I am sorry to say, is not all roses. With School cutbacks and State and Federal funding being frozen or cut back, our members are suffering the consequences. Members' hours are being cut, positions are being cut, and some school districts have started looking into sub-contracting services out to private companies. From what is coming out of St. Paul, next year is going to be worse than this year has been. With that in mind, and next year's session in St Paul being a funding year, it is essential that our voice is heard. The time is now if we want to save our jobs and our schools. So please take the time to step up and make your voice heard, plan now to attend the 2011 MSEA Day on the Hill. Our jobs depend on it.

Now I would like to talk about MSEA's Strategic Plan. During the Board's work on developing a plan it became obvious that somewhere in the last 30 years MSEA had become a Fee for Service organization. If you look at our Mission Statement, that is not what MSEA was founded on. MSEA was founded on and created to recognize the dignity of the individual worker and the power of the organized body, through an EMPOWERED MEMBERSHIP and a professional staff. I want to point out that we do have a professional staff and they do a very good job. It's when we look close at the EMPOWERED MEMBERSHIP that MSEA has not lived up to its mission statement. We have members that get elected Stewards, Treasurers, and Secretaries and we are not providing them with the help and training they need to do their job. In the last few years as the Board was developing the Plan it was quite obvious that training for the members was key to the future of MSEA, so the Board made training a priority before the plan was finalized.

The major problem now is what we do for units that don't send members to the available trainings. This is where it gets complicated because as a democratic organization we can't come out and make it mandatory that all Stewards will attend a Steward training. In most units it is hard enough to get somebody to step forward and become the Steward, and making training mandatory would get fewer members stepping forward to do the job. Out of all this came the only real solution that could work, and that was to have Field Reps spend more time training and working with Chief Stewards and other leaders in their assigned units teaching them to handle more issues themselves. We know this works because some Field Reps are doing this already as time permits, and several of our units are self-sufficient and have the EMPOWERED MEMBERSHIP that our mission statement talks about. That's why assigning Reps to regions and eventually having Reps live within their regions is so important. Sitting in a car looking out a windshield for 4 or 5 hours to drive to Bemidji is not productive time. That's 4 or 5 hours lost that a Field Rep could be using to train unit leaders. To some this might seem like it will take more time, but it will pay off over time because as more and more leaders become empowered, they will do more for their units and not need the Field Rep to handle every problem that comes up.

Why is empowering the membership so important? You do not build ownership for the members or get respect from a school district if every time there is a problem your local leader picks up the phone and calls the Field Rep to handle it. It's important because by training and empowering the local leadership and membership they take pride and ownership of their local units. It gives the local leadership the confidence to discuss problems with the local school management, which in turn builds respect from the local school district.

I would also like to mention the internship program that the Board has asked the ED to set up and implement. This is really exciting and long overdue. MSEA has a lot of talented members and this program will allow members to get the training and experience that they need in order to become a staff member for MSEA.

Tomorrow morning we will be going over the Strategic Plan and Goals that the Board has adopted with you and will have a question and answer period then because it is important for everybody to be on board with the plans and goals. Board, Staff, and most importantly, You the members of MSEA.

In Unity,  
MSEA President Evan Mapes