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How To Break Up With Your Union 101

The Mackinac Center is giving teachers an education on how to drop their memberships to the Michigan Education Association (MEA), contacting them through school e-mails and setting up a new website.

"We are trying to inform MEA union members any way we can to make sure that they are well aware of the August window," said Mackinac Center Director of Labor Policy Vincent VERNUCCIO.

The center has been urging a rule change that would require unions to publicize opt-out information (See "Mac Center-Initiated Rule Would Require Unions To Publicize Opt-Out Info," 6/5/14). In the meantime, the Center is taking matters into its own hands.

The Mackinac Center has obtained lists of teachers' email addresses from school districts whose contracts have been up since the Right to Work law went into effect. An e-mail that went out to teachers today was republished by EclectaBlog. In it, a former union member says he exercised his right to opt out of the union and shares the Mackinac Center's informational website, AugustOptOut.org.

Vernuccio said the Mackinac Center obtained e-mail addresses through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and "other avenues."

"We just want to help the MEA out. Doug PRATT

when he testified before the Senate committee said that his organization, MEA, was not in the business of informing his members how to opt out, and we just want to help them," Vernuccio said.

He's referencing a hearing before the Senate Committee on Compliance and Accountability (See "Senate Committee Peers Through MEA's Side Of August Window," 12/4/13).

Regarding the email, EclectaBlog notes that "The irony of this is that the MEA itself is not allowed to use the public school email system to conduct union business just as they are not allowed to deduct union dues from teachers' paychecks as was once permitted."

Patrick WRIGHT said that PA 53 of 2012 permitted employees to confer with a labor organization during working hours without loss of time or pay, but an employer couldn't use public school resources to assist a labor organization in collecting dues or service fees.

"I know from our litigation with them that they have access to all of their members' emails and home addresses. So the idea that this is some sort of unfair fight strikes me as really odd," Wright said.

The MEA did not return a phone call on this subject.