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MERC Rejects Graduate Employees Unionization

The Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) this morning rejected, 3-0, a petition by the Graduate Employees Organization to unionize graduate student research assistants at the University of Michigan. In delivering the decision, MERC cited a 1981 ruling in which it had already held that these students were not public employees and were therefore outside its jurisdiction.

Mackinac Center Legal Foundation Director Patrick WRIGHT praised the decision as "a victory for the rule of law," remarking: "MERC enforced the law, rather than allowing a politically divided U of M Board of Regents to bypass it through a hasty resolution. This resolution called for a public employee union election for a group of students who weren't public employees in the first place. The regents have no legal authority to

expand the statutory definition of public employees."

The MCLF, citing the 1981 MERC precedent, had filed a motion with MERC on behalf of U of M graduate student research assistant Melinda DAY.

Samantha MONTGOMERY, president of the Graduate Employees Organization, wrote in a statement that MERC still allows the union to put the question before the employees.

"The goal has always been to get GSRA's the right to vote on joining a union. This decision affirms that a third party has no role in limiting such a vote," she said. weren't public employees in the first place. The regents have no legal authority to expand the statutory definition of public employees."