



A Union of Professionals

Metropolitan State Faculty Federation

Newsletter

MSUDENVERFF.ORG

ISSUE 6, FALL 2024



MSFF Officers and Steering Committee Nominations

This is a call for nominations for the election of officers and the Steering Committee of the Metropolitan State Faculty Federation, Local 6321, of the American Federation of Teachers, for 2-year terms. These nominations and the subsequent elections are in accordance with the MSFF Constitution and Bylaws.

Nominations open on Sept. 13, 2024 and close on Sept. 27, 2024.

Each candidate must receive nominations from two MSFF members. You may nominate yourself. All candidates for office shall be members of the MSFF.

The offices up for election are:

- President
- Vice-president
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- 8-member Steering Committee

The MSFF Elections Committee will count the nominations and prepare an electronic ballot distributed to MSFF members in good standing. Voting will be open from Sept. 30 - Oct. 9, 2024.

[*Nomination Form*](#)

Current MSFF OFFICERS

President Sheila Rucki
Vice President .. Richard Wagner
Secretary... Andrea Maestrejuan
Treasurer Matt Maher

Current STEERING COMMITTEE

Alex Boodrookas
 Leslie Boyd
 Kim Klimek
 Lisa Ortiz

Inside

[Call For Nominations](#)
[Encampment Update](#)
[MSFF's Continued Progress](#)
[Election Endorsements](#)

ENCAMPMENT UPDATE

A number of important issues that emerged from last semester's encampment on the Tivoli quad are still ongoing. We wanted to provide an account to our members and summarize what MSFF has done in response.

As you are no doubt aware, on 26 April - the second day of the encampment on the Tivoli quad - AHEC called in the Denver police to arrest over forty people, including students and faculty from MSU Denver and CU Denver. The Steering Committee remains terribly concerned about the student safety issues raised by the arrests. Regardless of one's opinion on the politics of the encampment or the university camping policy, it is evident that the deployment of police on campus against nonviolent protesters represented an unnecessary and dramatic escalation that

threatened our students' physical safety. No one disputes that the encampment was peaceful before the police arrived. But those of us who were there saw just how dangerous the situation became. The police were heavily armed, in full riot gear, including guns, face shields, batons, and bulletproof vests. Those arrested were sitting peacefully on the Tivoli lawn. The scene was harrowing, and we are lucky that no one was seriously hurt, as [happened](#) when police were called to other encampments [across](#) the country - though tussles with police did lead to minor injuries. The deployment of police is also an equity issue. The experience was especially alarming for our students of color, who face a disproportionate threat of police violence.

Shortly following the arrests, the Steering Committee called

a meeting to gather member suggestions and feedback and coordinate a response. Faculty overwhelmingly expressed their concern for the lack of regard for student safety demonstrated by the arrests. Following the meeting, nearly two hundred community members - mainly faculty - signed our petition calling for a policy reigning in AHEC's power to deploy the police against peaceful demonstrators on campus. The petition is still available [here](#).

While AHEC has [claimed](#) that they called police only as a "last resort," this is difficult to believe. The mass arrests came only one day into the encampment - much earlier than at other universities - leaving little time for substantive negotiation. The decision to call police and make dozens of arrests over a violation of a university camping policy appears profoundly disproportionate. Moreover, AHEC has shown no desire to surrender their power to deploy police against peaceful demonstrators. In fact, it tried to order a second round of arrests shortly after the first, only to be thwarted because the Denver Chief of Police turned them down, [saying](#) that there would be "no legal way" to carry them out.

Beyond raising serious safety concerns, the mass arrests proved counterproductive. Following April 26th, the encampment grew enormously. As days turned into weeks, organizers encountered a number of logistical issues, nota-

UNIONS HELP WORKERS' BOTTOM LINES

- 11.2% more:** what union workers are paid on average vs. their nonunion counterparts.
- 94%** of workers covered by a union contract have access to employer-sponsored **health benefits**, vs. just 68% of nonunion workers.
- 93%** of workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement have **paid sick days** compared to 74% of nonunion workers.
- 41%:** how much more likely union workers are to have employer-sponsored **retirement plans** than their nonunion counterparts.

bly with regards to weather, sanitation, and, occasionally, security - though it should be noted that the last was generated entirely by counter-protestors and people unconnected to the encampment. The situation generally remained peaceful, with students organizing a system of internal security. Many community members attended events and rallies, including teach-ins and discussions, while community members donated supplies. Demonstrators also organized a number of sit-ins in buildings across campus. These also remained peaceful, but resulted in a number of additional criminal charges, most of which are directed against students.

While the MSU Denver administration issued a number of forceful public condemnations of the protestors, it proved much more open to productive engagement than did the vast majority of institutions of higher education across the United States. Most notably, it agreed to release financial information to increase transparency with regards to its investments. This approach appears to have significantly reduced tensions. In mid-May, negotiators from the encampment reached a tentative agreement with the MSU Denver to lay the groundwork for further talks surrounding encampment demands. However, the prospective deal

fell apart, apparently because it was reached only as the encampment was disintegrating. On 17 May, the encampment disbanded, with the demonstrators organizing a last protest that evening.

The situation was complicated by the tri-institutional nature of the Auraria campus. The CU administration, against which most student demands were directed, was intransigent and unwilling to productively engage with the protestors, thus making things more difficult for MSU Denver. The national conversation, which often framed peaceful encampments as extremist or threaten-

Continued on page 4

Looking Forward to Continued Progress on Behalf of Faculty

By Richard Wagner, MSFF Vice President

During the current 2022-24 term, MSFF leadership has raised awareness of many issues facing faculty including shared governance, transparency, and working conditions (See our Priority Issues). After years of stagnant membership, our numbers are growing substantially. The MSFF has representation on several important institutional committees. However, workload pressures limit the ability of the officers and steering committee to fully take advantage of opportunities to advocate for improved working conditions for our members. Some officers, including President Sheila Rucki, are stepping down after consecutive 2-year terms (2020-2024), and some Steering

Committee members have reluctantly stepped aside for lack of time. Fortunately, Sheila has committed to continuing on the Steering Committee. Therefore, we are actively seeking members to serve as officers (several hours per week) and on the Steering Committee (a couple hour per week) or on one of our appointed committees (Membership, Budget, Grievance).

Visibility

Two years ago, we often heard from newer faculty members: “We have a Union?”. We owe a debt to Lisa Ortiz (Newsletter Editor) and Andrea Maestresjuan (MSFF Secretary) for publicizing our activities. We are grateful for

the participation of union members at our numerous Town Halls which have included topics on University Budget, Faculty Workload, Academic Freedom, and AHEC police actions.

Growing Membership

Prior to 2022, MSFF still had high membership rates among long-time faculty who joined during the successful campaign to preserve tenure twenty years ago, but membership was much lower among newer faculty members. We are redoubling our efforts to expand membership among junior faculty and underrepresented departments. The collective power of the union is inextricably linked to the strength of the membership.

ENCAMPMENT *Continued from page 3*

ing, did not seem to have helped either. Finally, the fact that policing powers largely rest in the hands of Auraria campus authorities, who are not themselves educators and have little direct contact with students, seems to have encouraged their tendency to view the demonstrators as some kind of threat, rather than as students.

Several issues from last semester remain to be addressed.

First, students and faculty are still facing criminal trials. While encampment-related charges are being [dropped](#) across the country, the Denver District Attorney's office is pressing forward with its prosecutions. Moreover, they are doing so with AHEC support - in fact, AHEC representatives are submitting testimony for the prosecution, against students and faculty. This doubling down on the use of police raises significant questions about AHEC's commitment to protecting students and faculty. Several dozen people arrested at the encampment rejected deals from the city and are planning to go to trial this fall, including three MSFF Steering Committee members.

Second, students - including MSU Denver students - are now facing disciplinary charges from the

university, a reversal of the initial position taken by Student Affairs. This has raised significant legal issues. Students have to be exceedingly careful in disciplinary hearings because many are still facing criminal charges, and so are hesitant to defend themselves because of the risk of self-incrimination. Their attorneys have generally asked to be present to try and reduce this risk, but conducting student disciplinary hearings alongside criminal trials creates unavoidable legal complications. Student associations are also facing suspension, including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which organized the encampment.

We will continue campaigning to protect the safety and rights of our students. We will also seek to keep lines of communication open. In response to our petition, President Davidson invited MSFF representatives to a meeting during the last days of the encampment, and we hope that our advocacy encouraged productive dialogue between the students and the administration.

As always, please reach out to us at info@msudenverff.org, or email individual Steering Committee [members](#), to get involved or provide feedback and suggestions.

Having an issue? Tell us!

Is there something you'd like the union to do? Something you wish were different? Something about your job that we can, collectively, make better? Please reach out by emailing us at info@msudenverff.org or by reaching either individual Steering Committee members.

AFT Colorado Election Endorsements

State House

HD 1 Javier Mabrey
HD 2 Steven Woodrow
HD 3 Meg Froelich
HD 4 Cecelia Espenoza
HD 5 Alex Valdez
HD 7 Jennifer Bacon
HD 8 Lindsay Gilchrist
HD 9 Emily Sirota
HD 10 Junie Joseph
HD 11 Karen McCormick
HD 12 Kyle Brown
HD 13 Julie McCluskie
HD 16 Stephanie Vigil
HD 17 Regina English
HD 18 Amy Pascal
HD 19 Michael Pierson
HD 23 Monica Duran
HD 25 Tammy Story
HD 26 Meghan Lukens
HD 27 Brianna Titone
HD 28 Sheila Lieder
HD 29 Shannon Bird
HD 30 Rebekah Stewart

HD 32 Manny Rutinel
HD 33 William Lindstedt
HD 34 Jenny Willford
HD 35 Lorena Garcia
HD 36 Michael Carter
HD 37 Chad Clifford
HD 38 Gretchen Ryden
HD 39 Eric Brody
HD 40 Naquetta Ricks
HD 41 Iman Jodeh
HD 42 Mandy Lindsay
HD 43 Robert Marshall
HD 44 Alyssa Nilemo
HD 45 Chad Cox
HD 49 Leslie Smith
HD 50 Mary Young
HD 52 Yara Zokaie
HD 53 Andrew Boesenecker
HD 57 Elizabeth Velasco
HD 59 Katie Stewart
HD 61 Eliza Hamrick
HD 62 Matthew Martinez

State Senate

SD 2 Jennifer Brady
SD 5 Cole Buerger
SD 6 Vivian Smotherman
SD 12 Marc Snyder
SD 13 Matt Dean Johnston
SD 14 Cathy Kipp
SD 16 Chris Kolker
SD 18 Judy Amabile
SD 19 Lindsay Daugherty
SD 21 Dafna Michaelson Jenet
SD 26 Jeff Bridges
SD 28 Mike Weissman
SD 29 Janet Buckner
SD 31 Chris Hansen
SD 33 James Coleman

State Board of Education

At Large: Rhonda Solis



State Senate

SD 2 Jennifer Brady
SD 5 Cole Buerger
SD 6 Vivian Smotherman
SD 12 Marc Snyder
SD 13 Matt Dean Johnston
SD 14 Cathy Kipp
SD 16 Chris Kolker
SD 18 Judy Amabile
SD 19 Lindsay Daugherty
SD 21 Dafna Michaelson Jenet
SD 26 Jeff Bridges
SD 28 Mike Weissman
SD 29 Janet Buckner
SD 31 Chris Hansen
SD 33 James Coleman

State House

HD 1 Javier Mabrey
HD 2 Steven Woodrow
HD 3 Meg Froelich
HD 4 Cecelia Espenoza
HD 5 Alex Valdez
HD 7 Jennifer Bacon
HD 8 Lindsay Gilchrist
HD 9 Emily Sirota
HD 10 Junie Joseph
HD 11 Karen McCormick
HD 12 Kyle Brown
HD 13 Julie McCluskie
HD 16 Stephanie Vigil
HD 17 Regina English
HD 18 Amy Pascal
HD 19 Michael Pierson
HD 23 Monica Duran
HD 25 Tammy Story
HD 26 Meghan Lukens
HD 27 Brianna Titone
HD 28 Sheila Lieder
HD 29 Shannon Bird
HD 30 Rebekah Stewart
HD 32 Manny Rutinel
HD 33 William Lindstedt
HD 34 Jenny Willford
HD 35 Lorena Garcia
HD 36 Michael Carter
HD 37 Chad Clifford
HD 38 Gretchen Ryden
HD 39 Eric Brody
HD 40 Naquetta Ricks
HD 41 Iman Jodeh
HD 42 Mandy Lindsay
HD 43 Robert Marshall
HD 44 Alyssa Nilemo
HD 45 Chad Cox
HD 49 Leslie Smith
HD 50 Mary Young
HD 52 Yara Zokaie
HD 53 Andrew Boesenecker
HD 57 Elizabeth Velasco
HD 59 Katie Stewart
HD 61 Eliza Hamrick
HD 62 Matthew Martinez

State Board of Education

At Large: Rhonda Solis

