



MAGE

Michigan Association of Governmental Employees
OPEIU Local 2002

THE QUARTERLY REPORT

January 2024

Message from the President

Happy New Year! I hope all our members enjoyed a great holiday season with friends and family.

While I am happy to report that a 5% wage increase (effective October 1) has been secured for NERE's, I also have the unfortunate task of sharing that the Civil Service Commission has not approved the one-time bonus of \$2,250.00. The Commission made the decision to table the one-time bonus until their next meeting in February. We will not sit idly by until this meeting. While we work to continue negotiations for this bonus, we also ask that our members reach out to Civil Service, your Representative, and even the Governor's Office to share your frustrations and tell them that NERE's deserve this bonus now!

As many NEREs are aware there are departments that continue to struggle with a pay compression issue. MAGE will be participating on a review committee for these specific departments to review the NERE classifications and their pay scales. These reviews will begin to take place early 2024. We are hopeful that this will result in substantial pay increases for positions that are greatly hindered by the pay compression.

An important reminder for our members that the MAGE General Council meeting will be taking place this year in May. Districts will soon be sending out meeting notices to their members for delegate elections. If you have an interest in participating in this year's General Council, be sure to attend your district meeting! We are excited that we can host this General Council meeting in person up at the Comfort Inn and Suites in Mt. Pleasant, MI.

As the new year kicks off, we are continuing our efforts to expand our membership base. Please be sure to share information about MAGE with your colleagues, especially new hires who may not yet know about us. It is incredibly important that NEREs know that MAGE is here for them! We want to make sure we can help as many NEREs as possible and we cannot do that if they are not members.

I hope that all our members have a great start to the new year. As always, if you have any questions, or need help, please do not hesitate to contact the MAGE office!

Labor Representatives in Action

In the past quarter, both Labor Relations Director John DeTizio and Legal Counsel Peter Neu have held informational meetings for both members and non-members at the Traverse City DHS office and the Kalamazoo Psychiatrist Hospital.

Labor Relations Tip!

Need to file an unfair labor practice charge? Here are a few tips! An employee, employee organization, or employers must file written unfair labor practice charges within 6 weeks of becoming aware of the cause of the charge. However, a charge can be filed up to six months after the unfair labor practice occurred if good cause can be proven. The Civil Service Hearing Office will confirm a copy of the charge is provided to each charged part and allows a total of 28 calendar days to provide a written answer. Have specific questions? Let us know!

Benefit Spotlight

Don't forget! MAGE members have access to numerous benefits! This quarter we want to highlight the new college benefit available.

Be sure to watch the MAGE website and your emails for the announcement of the opening of the 2024 OPEIU scholarship application period.

There are two OPEIU scholarships available, the Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship and the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship. The Howard Coughlin scholarship has a maximum value of \$6,500.00 and the John Kelly scholarship has a maximum value of \$3,250.00.

The Howard Coughlin scholarship is open to members, their children, step-children, or legally adopted children. The John Kelly scholarship is open to MAGE-OPEIU members only.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

HIGHLIGHTS (Provided by MAGE Lobbyist Todd Tennis)

Efforts to Offer Better Pension Options to State and School Workers Teed up for 2024

This year, Senators John Cherry (D-Flint), Kristen McDonald-Rivet (D-Bay City) and Sue Shink (D-Northfield Twp.) introduced a package of bills that would allow certain state workers to opt into the Michigan State Police Retirement System. Those bills were voted out of the Senate Labor Committee in September, but are awaiting the outcome of an actuarial study before they can move any further. Section 20h of PA 314 states that a system must provide an actuarial analysis before the adoption of pension benefit changes. Funding was appropriated in the FY 2024 budget to provide for such an actuarial study.

The Legislative Service Bureau is also working on bill drafts that would reopen the Michigan State Employees Retirement System for all state employees, and also add the Member Investment Plan in the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System as an option for new and current MPSERS members. These bills, if passed, would provide a defined benefit option for state workers who have not had one since 1997, and for public school employees who have only had a hybrid option since 2010.

Working with national allies such as the National Public Pension Coalition and the National Institute for Retirement Studies, pro-pension groups in Michigan hope to use the early part of 2024 to educate lawmakers and the public about the connection between diminished retirement benefits and the critical staffing shortage plaguing many parts of the public sector. They hope to be able to make a strong case that restoring defined benefit pension options will not only help alleviate these staffing shortages, but they will provide a longer-term glide path for the state to pay off existing unfunded pension liabilities. Moreover, because the annual cost of a defined benefit pension similar to the old MSERS or MPSERS plans are actually cheaper than the current defined contribution plans, the state can use those savings to pay off existing liabilities even faster.

Working People Made Strong Gains in 2023 Legislation; More to do in 2024

Right to Work, repealed. Prevailing Wage, restored. Pension tax, repealed. Public school collective bargaining rights, restored. PA 54 (prohibition on step increases for public employees while contracts are expired), repealed. These were some of the headline victories for working families this year. Other victories included positive labor gains in other areas such as language in the clean energy package that will make it more likely that new green jobs will go to unionized workers.

After decades of one union-busting law after another, labor made up some of those losses this past year.

However, pro-worker advocacy groups also learned that a razor-thin Democratic majority in both chambers is far from a lay-down hand. Several major initiatives that would roll back cuts to unemployment benefits, undo harmful changes on workers compensation benefits, and of course reverse major losses to public sector pensions have yet to be even introduced this session. There is a sense among some legislative leaders that pro-union groups are getting everything they really need and that any further wins will be harmful in protecting the narrow House majority in 2024.

It is clear that working families and organized labor have several strong allies in the Democratic Legislative caucuses. It has also become clear that, unless pro-worker organizations can win some support among Republican lawmakers, they must win over every member of the Democratic caucuses individually and obtain direct commitments to support specific goals. For example, efforts to provide improved retirement options for state employees will need to target every member of the Legislature and address the concerns of each individual member. This will be a daunting task, but the goal of providing real pension options for MAGE members hired after 1997 is worth the work.

Visit the MAGE website for the full legislative report.

Announcements:

- MAGE General Council: May 4, 2024. Watch your emails and mail for District Meeting notices to elect delegates for the MAGE 2024 General Council Meeting!
- Would you like a MAGE informational meeting to be held at your office? If you would like to set up a lunch meeting for members and potential members to speak with MAGE Labor Representatives, call the MAGE Office today! 1-800-477-6243.