



STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT Collective bargaining and MST A

In May 2007, the Missouri Supreme Court handed down a ruling that opened the door for teachers to bargain collectively with their boards of education.* What will this mean for Missouri teachers and for your CTA?

What does the ruling say?

The scope of the ruling is narrow, and it will be up to the legislature to flesh out the details. In essence, it says that a school board **must** meet with teachers and **must** abide by any written agreements that are reached. We believe those are good things for teachers.

How will this change the way teachers interact with their districts?

Before the ruling, teachers had the right to join a union or association of their choice, and that union or association could assist them in preparing proposals regarding salaries, board policies and other work-related issues to present to their school-district employer. **That has not changed.**

What has changed is that now school-board officials must meet and negotiate with teachers. If they reach a written agreement concerning wages, benefits or related working conditions, the school board must honor that agreement.

Does MST A oppose collective bargaining?

MSTA strongly supports the rights of teachers to bargain — or negotiate — collectively. In fact, MST A resolutions speak in favor of many of the very issues the court ruled on. We have always been advocates for strong professional negotiations as evidenced by our resolutions and by our successful salary and negotiation program.

Because MST A believes that schools are not factories, classrooms are not assembly lines and children are not widgets, we have in the past spoken out against the negative baggage that goes with traditional, industrial-style collective bargaining. We oppose teacher strikes and work stoppages because they impact the children we teach. We oppose forced unionism and agency shop.

Missouri has more than one teacher group because MST A has always defended the right of Missouri teachers to join the organization that best meets their needs — or to join nothing at all. Your freedom to choose is an essential right.

What is the next step?

In reality, until the legislature acts to define processes and set rules, many school districts will likely continue to operate in the same manner as in previous years — except, as noted above, they now must meet with teachers and abide by agreements.

For more than 150 years, MST A has worked to improve the working conditions and salaries of Missouri teachers. We will continue our mission — while at the same time adapting to changing conditions. As the rules change, MST A will change. It's that simple.

MSTA will be working to craft legislation that will provide an effective and professional framework for teachers and school districts to meet and negotiate. We also will assist local teacher groups that want to bargain collectively.

What should your local CTA do next?

Now more than ever, it is important for teachers in your district to work collaboratively and collectively. MST A is prepared to help you do just that. Encourage non-joiners to join MST A. Encourage apathetic members to become active in the local CTA. Encourage your CTA to take an assertive and professional stance toward negotiations with your local administration and school board.

In addition, MST A will provide a variety of materials about collective bargaining on our Web site at www.msta.org/bargaining. Finally, if you or your CTA have questions about this issue, contact your MST A field service coordinator to arrange a meeting. Remember: We're there for you!

**Independence-NEA v. Independence School District*