MSCF Minute

An electronic publication of the Minnesota State College Faculty

Volume 3, Issue 22
February 16, 2017

Changing Landscape

by Kevin Lindstrom, MSCF president

Regardless of where we fall on the political spectrum, I think we can all agree that the results of the Presidential election are changing our national landscape in many profound ways. Some might think that is great. Others might think that is terrible. Still others might be somewhere in the middle, or be indifferent to some degree or another. For the purposes of this article, I am not going to pass judgement on the changing landscape. Instead, I'm going to suggest the change is real, very real, and deserving of your attention.

After the election the speculation regarding the future began almost immediately. In our unionized higher education world, the speculation centered on potential actions which could impact the standing of public unions like ours. At the center of concern were future Supreme Court cases that might look like the Friedrichs case we talked so much about over the past couple of years. As you will recall, the death of Justice Scalia altered the course of that case, while revealing that the remaining justices were split 4-4 on the issue. A post-election look to the future assumed that a new Supreme Court nominee would likely take an anti-union view in similar cases. This led some to believe that a case would likely be ruled on sometime between January and June of 2018 that would eliminate the collection of agency fee, or fair share, dues by unions.

More recent thinking suggests that a similar outcome regarding agency fee could come much sooner. The rash of executive orders coming from the President's office has led some to believe that an executive order could effectively eliminate the collection of fair share dues much sooner than 2018. Consider the possibility of an executive order that ties federal funding to anti-union measures. Such an action could come at any time. This possibility obviously ups the urgency quotient.

Still other thinking, and news reports that have appeared over the past couple weeks, give rise to the possibility of a national right-to-work law. Even more daunting is the prospect that such a law may be modeled after Wisconsin's Act 10, which went well beyond an attack on agency fee. Again, a law could be enacted well before 2018. The urgency quotient continues to rise.

Please click on the video to watch a short clip of President Lindstrom addressing members at a recent strategic planning session regarding the potential impacts of a changing landscape.

Whatever the form, it is all but certain that we will lose the right to collect fair share dues sometime in the foreseeable future. It also seems quite likely that a companion move will eliminate payroll dues deduction, the mechanism by which dues are automatically deducted from paychecks. This would mean that future dues would need to be collected another way. Imagine the cumbersome complexity of such an effort.

The loss of dues collections mechanisms could have devastating impacts on MSCF. I say "could," not "would," because the real force of the impact is not a function of the ruling, order, or law itself, but rather a function of how we respond to it. Over the coming weeks and months you are going to see and hear a good deal more about this in the Minute and in other MSCF venues. We will certainly be talking about it at the delegate assembly.

All of this is real. All of this is very present. And, all of this merits your attention. The landscape is changing. The only way to deal with it is to start by recognizing that fact.

Welcome New Members!

Daniel Kvaal, *Saint Cloud*

Brian Volkmuth, *Saint Cloud*