

MCEA Candidate Recommendation Process

MCEA conducts one of the most thorough candidate screening processes of any organization in the county.

MCEA contacts all incumbents and all announced and rumored candidates for office. We also run ads in both major party county newsletters soliciting candidates to participate in our screening process.

All candidates are asked to complete a detailed questionnaire. All candidates are invited to participate in a personal interview with a team of rank-and-file MCEA member-volunteers from the Political Action and Legislative Support (PALS) Committee. This year alone, the PALS Committee has conducted more than 90 candidate interviews. Each candidate is asked a set of structured questions. The interviews are all taped. The PALS Committee then discusses the interviews, reviews the questionnaires, and makes a recommendation to the MCEA Board. A 58% vote by the PALS Committee is necessary for a recommendation. The Board then reviews the recommendations, considers the broader political contexts, and makes its own recommendations; again with a 58% majority requirement. Those recommendations then go to MCEA's final decision-making body, the Representative Assembly. At the RA, typically more than 130 elected MCEA Reps from schools all across the county discuss and debate the candidates. Approval of final recommendations of candidates again requires a 58% majority vote.

Criteria

MCEA bases its recommendations on a number of factors, including:

	Criteria	Indicators
1	Voting Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For County Council and County Executive, primary consideration is given to votes approving funding for our contracts and votes on tax issues to provide adequate funding for the public school system. - For Board of Education, primary consideration is given to votes approving our contracts, as well as votes on other educational policy issues that affect the working conditions of MCEA unit members. - For the General Assembly MSTA compiles a voting record. For example, during the last legislative term, the MSTA scorecard includes 12 votes in the Senate and 15 in the House over the four year term. In some situations the listed votes were unanimous. In other situations there were multiple votes on the same bill. Listed votes included numerous tax issues related to ensuring adequate funding for education, as well as votes on use of public tax dollars for private schools, as well as high profile votes on the Thornton school funding plan, the pension enhancement, and the proposed state take-over of 11 public schools in Baltimore.
2	Written Responses to Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the General Assembly, MSTA distributes a questionnaire. Consideration is given both to the "yes/no" answers on support for MSTA's positions as well as the extent and quality of the written comments elaborating on their positions. - For the County Council, County Executive and Board of Education, the questionnaires are developed by MCEA. All questions require written explanations and they are evaluated based on the extent and quality of the written comments.
3	Interview Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The interview is an essential component of the screening process. Candidates are evaluated based on their understanding of the issues, their ability to communicate effectively, and their positions on the issues.
4	Communication with MCEA and its Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is important to MCEA that we not elect candidates who only think about us when they need our support for re-election. Elected officials who communicate regularly with MCEA's elected leaders earn additional consideration. Those who only contact the organization when they want our support for re-election do not. - We also want elected officials who are responsive to our members as well. Candidates who are accessible during the legislative session, who are willing to

		meet with delegations of members (when asked) on lobby visits, and the quality of those visits, are relevant as well.
5	Participation at MCEA events	- MCEA annually sponsors a Legislative Breakfast to give our members the opportunity to meet informally with their elected representatives (county officials as well as members of the state delegation) and to provide an opportunity for those representatives to learn more about the organization's priority. Those who participate earn our support.
6	Effectiveness as an Elected Official	- It is important to MCEA that the representatives we support be effective in getting bills passed. It is not sufficient to be on the right side of issues if you are unable to build the coalitions and provide the leadership to actually make things happen. The record of elected officials in actually getting bills passed, in making things happen, is a consideration as well. - Elected officials who move up to positions of leadership, be it in the General Assembly or in county government, can exert more influence and clearly have support from among their colleagues. While one cannot expect first-term politicians to assume leadership positions; over time whether an elected official moves into positions of leadership (ex. committee or subcommittee chairs) is another measure of their effectiveness
7	Diversity/ Union Membership	- MCEA makes no apologies for wanting to promote more diversity among the elected leadership of our increasingly diverse county. MCEA also believes that the election of active union members to office is good for our organization, the labor movement, and working families in general. As a result, we strive to support candidates of color and candidates who are active union members.
8	Campaign Viability	- Being right on the issues isn't enough. A candidate must be able to run a competitive campaign. Consideration is given to the quality of a candidate's campaign plan, their ability to raise the money they will need, the extent of endorsements they have from prominent community leaders and organizations, early poll numbers (if available), and the nature of their opposition - For incumbents, their record of communication with their constituents and their visibility in their districts are also relevant indicators of their campaign's viability. Incumbents who communicate regularly with their constituents and who regularly attend community events in their district are more likely to have a base of support among voters. Those who do not enter their re-election campaigns without the same viability.
9	Support from Allies	- A candidate's positions on education issues is primary to MCEA. However a candidate's positions on other issues that MCEA, MSTA and NEA may have policy positions on, are also relevant (for example, raising the minimum wage, protecting collective bargaining rights, etc.). Consideration is given to candidates' responses on questionnaires, and their support or lack of support, from the Central Labor Council and other similar organizations.
10	Past Support from MCEA	- Whether or not a candidate has received MCEA's recommendation in the past is a relevant factor as well.
11	Assistance to MCEA in other ways	- MCEA on occasion asks incumbent elected officials, and aspiring candidates, to assist the organization in other ways. Frequently we seek support from others for our recommended candidates for the Board of Education. Recently we sought support on our successful pension campaign. Incumbents and candidates who are responsive and support the organization in other ways also earn additional consideration.