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An Act To Clarify the Right of Public School Employees To Engage in Collective Bargaining

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, this legislation clarifies the ability of public school employees to engage in collective bargaining prior to July 1, 2009; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §1461, sub-§8 is enacted to read:

8. Retention of duties pending referendum. Until the approval of a proposed school administrative reorganization plan at a referendum under subsection 5, each participating school administrative unit retains all authority, duties and obligations of the public employer of the employees of the school administrative unit pursuant to Title 26, chapter 9-A, including but not limited to the authority and duty to negotiate a successor collective bargaining agreement that will take effect on or after the operational date of the proposed regional school unit.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §1461-A, sub-§3, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 668, §5, is amended to read:

3. Authorization. The regional school unit board is authorized to take all other actions provided under state law to prepare the regional school unit to become operational on July 1st for the first operational year, including the authority to open and maintain accounts, to incur expenses to be allocated among the regional school unit's member school administrative units in accordance with the reorganization plan for the regional school unit and to file applications for school construction projects and revolving renovation fund loans and other available funding.

Prior to the operational date of the regional school unit, the regional school unit board shall take measures necessary to prepare to meet its obligations as a public employer on and after the operational date pursuant to Title 26, chapter 9-A, including but not limited to negotiating a successor collective bargaining agreement that will take effect on or after the operational date. Until the operational date of the regional school unit, each participating school administrative unit retains all other authority, duties and obligations of the public employer of the employees of the school administrative unit pursuant to Title 26, chapter 9-A.

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §1464, sub-§2, ¶E, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 240, Pt. XXXX, §13, is amended to read:

E. When all bargaining units that will be merged into a regional school unit-wide bargaining unit are represented by separate local affiliates of the same state labor organization, the units must be merged as of the operational date established pursuant to section 1463, subsection 1. The identity of the single affiliate that will be designated the bargaining agent for the merged unit must be selected by the existing bargaining agents and the state labor organization. Upon completion of the merger and designation of the bargaining agent and notification by the state labor organization to the regional school unit, the regional school unit shall recognize the designated bargaining agent as the representative of employees in the merged unit. If necessary, the parties will then execute a written amendment to any collective bargaining agreement then in effect to change the name of the bargaining agent to reflect the merger.

Prior to the operational date of the regional school unit, the single affiliate that is designated as the bargaining agent for the merged unit shall take measures necessary to prepare to meet its obligations as the bargaining agent on and after the operational date pursuant to Title 26, chapter 9-A, including, but not limited to, the authority and duty to negotiate a successor collective bargaining agreement that will take effect on or after the operational date. Until the operational date of the regional school unit, each existing bargaining agent retains all other authority, duties and obligations of the bargaining agent of the employees of the school administrative unit pursuant to Title 26, chapter 9-A.

Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §1464, sub-§2, ¶H, as amended by PL 2007, c. 566, §3, is further amended to read:

H. When bargaining units with different bargaining agents must be merged into a single regional school unit-wide bargaining unit pursuant to this section, the bargaining agent of the merged bargaining unit must be selected in accordance with Title 26, section 967 except as modified in this section.

- (1) A petition for an election to determine the bargaining agent must be filed with the Maine Labor Relations Board by any of the current bargaining agents or the regional school unit.
- (2) The petition must be filed not more than 90 days prior to August 31, 2012.
- (3) The election ballot may contain only the names of the bargaining agents of bargaining units that will be merged into the regional school unit-wide bargaining unit and the choice of "no representative," but no other choices. No showing of interest is required from any such bargaining agent other than its current status as representative.
- (4) The obligation to bargain with existing bargaining agents continues from the operational date established pursuant to section 1463, subsection 1 until the determination of the bargaining agent of the regional school unit-wide bargaining unit under this section; but in no event may any collective bargaining agreement that is executed after the operational date extend beyond August 31, 2012.

(5) The Maine Labor Relations Board shall expedite to the extent practicable all petitions for determination of the bargaining agent in the regional school unit-wide bargaining unit filed pursuant to this section.

(6) The bargaining units must be merged into a regional school unit-wide bargaining unit as of the date of certification of the results of the election by the Maine Labor Relations Board or the expiration of the collective bargaining agreements in the unit, whichever occurs later.

(7) Until August 31, 2012, existing bargaining agents shall continue to represent the bargaining units that they represented on the day prior to the operational date of the regional school unit. If necessary, each bargaining agent and the regional school unit must negotiate an interim collective bargaining agreement to expire on August 31, 2012.

(8) When there are 2 or more bargaining units in which there are employees who are represented either by the same bargaining agent or by separate local affiliates of the same state labor organization that will be merged into a regional school unit-wide bargaining unit with one or more other bargaining units pursuant to the election procedures described in this paragraph, the bargaining units that are represented either by the same bargaining agent or by separate local affiliates of the same state labor organization must merge as of the operational date. The procedures for merger of separate local affiliates of the same state labor organization described in paragraph E must be followed if applicable.

Sec. 5. 26 MRSA §965, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1985, c. 46, is further amended to read:

1. Negotiations. It shall be the obligation of the public employer and the bargaining agent to bargain collectively. "Collective bargaining" means, for the purposes of this chapter, their mutual obligation:

A. To meet at reasonable times;

B. To meet within 10 days after receipt of written notice from the other party requesting a meeting for collective bargaining purposes, provided as long as the parties have not otherwise agreed in a prior written contract. This obligation is suspended during the period between a referendum approving a new regional school unit and the operational date of the regional school unit, as long as the parties meet at reasonable times during that period;

C. To confer and negotiate in good faith with respect to wages, hours, working conditions and contract grievance arbitration, except that by such obligation neither party shall be compelled to agree to a proposal or be required to make a concession and except that public employers of teachers shall meet and consult but not negotiate with respect to educational policies; for the purpose of this paragraph, educational policies shall not include wages, hours, working conditions or contract grievance arbitration;

D. To execute in writing any agreements arrived at, the term of any such agreement to be subject to negotiation but shall not exceed 3 years; and

E. To participate in good faith in the mediation, fact-finding and arbitration procedures required by this section.

Whenever wages, rates of pay or any other matter requiring appropriation of money by any municipality or county are included as a matter of collective bargaining conducted pursuant to this chapter, it is the obligation of the bargaining agent to serve written notice of request for collective bargaining on the public employer at least 120 days before the conclusion of the current fiscal operating budget, except that this requirement is waived in the event that a bargaining agent of a newly formed bargaining unit is recognized or certified during the period not more than 120 days nor less than 30 days prior to the end of the fiscal period. The 120-day notice requirement is also waived with respect to regional school units formed pursuant to Title 20-A, chapter 103-A, subchapter 2 prior to their first year of operation.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

Effective May 8, 2009.