



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

March 23, 2010

Dear Colleague,

Due to my trip to New York, this month's newsletter is coming to you a week later than usual. As mentioned in last month's letter, I was invited to participate in a debate about teachers unions.

About 500 people showed up for the debate which had the rather confusing motion, "Do Not Blame the Teachers Unions for Our Failing Schools." In other words, if you think the unions are to blame, you would vote against the motion. (Our team made it very clear that the teachers unions are not the *only* problem with our schools.) Each person votes electronically before the debate and then again after it's over. The winner is the team that gets the most people to change their vote. Here are the results:

Before the debate

After the debate

For the motion - 24%

For the motion – 25%

Undecided – 33%

Undecided – 7%

Against the motion – 43%

Against the motion – 68%

Assuming both the pro-union folks and the anti-union folks stayed put, the numbers tell quite a story. Of the "undecideds" – a few stayed undecided, but just about everyone else went to the anti-union side. To put it into simply, the pro-union side got clobbered.

If you are interested in experiencing the debate, there are several ways to do it. You can watch it in its entirety online at <http://intelligencesquaredus.org/index.php/past-debates/dont-blame-teachers-unions-for-our-failing-schools/>

There is an edited version that will be televised on Bloomberg TV and broadcast on NPR stations. For details, go to <http://intelligencesquaredus.org/index.php/tvradio>

And if you would like a transcript, it can be found here - <http://intelligencesquaredus.org/wp-content/uploads/Teachers-Unions-031610.pdf>

Diana Atwood, a long time friend of CTEN, is very much in the fight against possible loss of social security benefits for teachers. In her own words,

Will your earned Social Security benefit be reduced because you will also receive a public pension? Contact www.ssfairness.com for information as to how you can help repeal the Spousal Offset Pension and/or Windfall Elimination Provisions.

Find out how you can help pass HR 235 (Berman) and SB 484 (Feinstein).

Don't wait until it's time for you to retire and you learn you will receive far less income than you are entitled to receive. The time to act is NOW! The time to let your friends know is NOW!

If you would like to get more information, please contact Diana directly at mzdja@cox.net

It probably won't be news to many of our readers that the public employee unions donate aggressively to Political Action Committees. Ed Lasky at *American Thinker* has written an article - http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/03/public_sector_unions_and_their.html - that spells things out quite clearly. The numbers he uses come from the Center for Responsive Politics - <http://www.opensecrets.org/> - a research group which tracks money that flows into U.S. politics.

As a former teacher, I am always curious to see where the two national teachers unions, the National Educational Association and the American Federation of Teachers, fit into this picture. Well, if you combine the dollar amount of the two organizations' donations, they become #1 in the country – teachers unions have spent over \$56 million of their members' dues on PACs in the past 12 years.

And just who are the recipients of teachers unions' largess? Between 1998 and 2010, the NEA gave only 6% of its \$30+ million to Republicans. And they are downright fair-minded compared to their junior partner - the AFT. The latter gave a whopping 0% to Republicans. (98% went to Democrats; the missing 2% went to "other.") For organizations that claim to represent all teachers, this is a bad joke. They have never represented Republicans, and thanks to the availability of these statistics, we can all see that.

Due to the floundering economy, teachers have been laid off all over the country. Generally, it is the newest hires who find themselves unemployed. But this time around, the grumbling has been intensified. In the February National Council on Teacher Quality, there is very fair-minded piece called *Teacher Layoffs: Rethinking "Last-Hired, First-Fired" Policies*. To read it, please go to http://www.nctq.org/p/docs/nctq_dc_layoffs.pdf

I have an article that is featured in the current issue of *Education Matters*, the newsletter of the Association of American Educators. In *The War on Progress*, I illustrate the fact that the teachers' unions are the greatest impediment to education reform in America today. To read the article, go to <http://www.aaeteachers.org/images/em/2010marnews.pdf>

Recently, we have sent out several questions to you about current subjects that seem to be of general interest. The responses have been very illuminating. As such, we will continue to do this kind of polling. We think the above piece on seniority, as well as the firing of every teacher in Central Falls, RI, are subjects worth weighing in on. Please let us know if you have a particular question that you would like us to pose to our subscribers.

In any event, thanks as always for your continued support, interest and feedback. It is invaluable to all of us at CTEN. Please let us know if there is a subject that you would like to see covered in one of our newsletters.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President