



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

*Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues*

*Please note that in addition to the traditional emailing of the CTEN monthly newsletter, we will once again post it on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/> As usual, there are several controversial issues covered in this letter and we urge you to share your opinions with other teachers.*

November 21, 2018

Dear Colleague,

With the 2018 elections behind us, we see that the much-publicized record number of teachers running for office didn't do very well, despite the November 7<sup>th</sup> National Educational Association claim that "Voters deliver big wins for public education." As Mike Antonucci reports, in West Virginia, 13 educators won and 25 lost, and 10 of the 13 educator winners were incumbents. In Oklahoma, 17 educators were victorious and 31 were not. While 14 educators won in Arizona and only seven lost, 11 of the 14 winners were incumbents. Also, *The Wall Street Journal's* Michelle Hackman reports that there were actually more teachers who ran in 2016 than in 2018.

Nationally the results were similarly disappointing for #RedforED activists. According to an *Education Week* analysis, of 177 educators who ran for state office, only 42 emerged victorious. (It's true, however, that activist teachers and their unions gained some satisfaction with gubernatorial wins in Wisconsin, Illinois and Kansas – Republicans Scott Walker, Bruce Rauner and Laura Kelly, all perceived to be less friendly to traditional public schools, lost to their Democratic challengers.)

To read more about the election, go [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Speaking of unions, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten recently wrote a piece for *Education Week* in which (alluding to a GenForward poll of millennials attitudes toward a variety of education issues) she contended,

*While millennials give the nation's public schools mixed grades, they strongly support public education over privatized alternatives. Seventy-one percent of respondents said that increasing funding would do more to improve public education than providing more vouchers. And respondents' top answer for the best way to improve K-12 education in local districts is to increase school funding.*

Weingarten's statement is quite misleading; millennials are indeed very much in favor of vouchers. In fact, 87 percent of black and 85 percent of Latino millennials are in favor of them, as are 80 percent of Asian Americans and 70 percent of whites.

To read Weingarten's piece, go [here](#). To see the GenForward poll, go [here](#).

The latest lawsuit against the unions takes the United Teachers of Los Angeles to task for its narrow union resignation window. Special education teacher Thomas Few has filed a lawsuit against UTLA and the Los Angeles Unified School District "for violating his First Amendment rights to free speech and freedom of association." The teacher plaintiff, Thomas Few, is being represented by lawyers from the Liberty Justice Center, which represented Illinois state worker Mark Janus in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case and the California Policy Center.

In a press release, Brian Kelsey, senior attorney for the Liberty Justice Center said:

*The U.S. Supreme Court has declared that government employees have a choice and a voice when it comes to union membership. The United Teachers of Los Angeles are violating Thomas Few's constitutional rights by not allowing him to withdraw from the union. The Unified School District of Los Angeles is complicit in this constitutional violation by taking union dues from Mr. Few's paycheck against his will. In Janus v. AFSCME, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that government unions must receive clear, voluntary, and informed consent from government workers for membership. Liberty Justice Center is determined to see that these rights are respected throughout the United States.*

To learn more, go [here](#).

Also, on unions, CTEN board member, former teacher and Supreme Court plaintiff Rebecca Friedrichs' excellent new book, *Standing Up to Goliath: Battling State and National Teachers' Unions for the Heart and Soul of Our Kids and Country* has been released. My review of the book is available [here](#).

To order the book, go [here](#).

*Education Week's* Stephen Sawchuk has written a thoughtful piece in which he asks, "What if the inability of Americans to agree on our shared history—and the right way to teach it—is a cause of our current polarization rather than a symptom?" The beginning of the article focuses on the Alamo and Sawchuk makes the point that "what students learn about U.S. history varies depending on where they attend school, and is frequently filtered through the political and demographic makeup of different communities."

Where does this leave the parents of children who support strong immigration laws, President Trump, Second Amendment rights, capitalism, etc.?

In California, unless you have the means to send your kid to the private school of your choosing or can home-school, you and your kids very well may be stuck due to the diminishing number of public schools that stress traditional American values.

What do we do about this problem? The Cato Institute's Neil McCluskey says simply and unequivocally that public schooling, despite its reputation, has not brought us together, and that we need educational freedom. "When togetherness has been imposed, conflict and inequality have often been the results." For example, having no clout in traditional public schools, Catholics established an alternative to the de facto Protestant public schools, and by 1965 enrolled over five million children.

School choice – vouchers, tax credits, and education savings accounts provide an escape. Where choice has been instituted, academic results improve and taxpayers save money. McCluskey writes that Americans are unified by human nature. "It is simply easier to live and thrive in a society when you speak a common language and share a common culture. But people often want commonality without being required to sacrifice things they cherish that might also make them different. School choice works with that, enabling families and educators to freely interact, and to unify without zero-sum, forced sacrifice."

To read Sawchuk's piece, go [here](#). To read McCluskey's thoughts on the subject, go [here](#).

Charter schools have been in the news lately. Granada Hills Charter High School in northern Los Angeles, with over 4,700 students, is one of the largest charter schools in the U.S. And it is expanding to include elementary and middle school students at a separate campus.

The benefit, say Granada Hills Charter administrators, is to give those students a continuous, high-quality education for their entire school life from transitional kindergarten through grade 12 without school change.

Brian Bauer, executive director at Granada Hills Charter High School, says the expanded school "will allow students a seamless transition through a system where skills and content are built on, year after year."

To read more, go [here](#).

There are many school districts across the state which are facing monumental budget crises. In San Diego, things seem to be coming to a head as at least 10 districts in the county "are projecting that they will not be able to meet their financial commitments next school year." The primary reasons for the problem are rising pension and special education costs which are at odds with declining enrollment.

*Budget troubles are affecting even districts in supposedly wealthier areas such as San Dieguito Union High School District, which is projected to deficit spend millions for three years in a row, and Coronado Unified, which is projecting a \$3 million negative fund balance next year if it doesn't make budget cuts.*

*"This is actually a more serious time than during the recession," said Michael Simonson, assistant superintendent of business services for the San Diego County Office of Education, which reviews the budget of every school district in the county by September each year.*

To read more, go [here](#).

Also, CTEN will continue to keep up with post-*Janus* doings in addition to any other issues pertinent to education and teachers, and inform you as things happen. If you have any questions, or have experienced any problems because of your decision to leave your union, please let us know, and we will do our best to help you in a timely manner. We will also be able to share your concerns with other teachers across the state. And speaking of sharing, please pass this email along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through check, money order or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others. Thanks, as always.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President