



# 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.*

September 20, 2017

Dear Colleague,

These days, there are stories galore about the teacher shortage, but the facts tell a different story. The U.S. Department of Education has just released data that show the teaching force is actually growing proportionate to student population. In fact, we now have over 3.8 million public school teachers in the U.S., an *increase* of 13 percent in the last four years. During that same time period, student enrollment rose just 2 percent.

Mike Antonucci adds that between 2008 and 2016, student enrollment was flat but the teaching force grew from 3.4 million to over 3.8 million, a rise of 12.4 percent.

Not only doesn't University of Pennsylvania education professor Richard Ingersoll buy the shortage claim, he insists there is a glut. Ingersoll, who has long studied teacher-staffing trends, says the growth in the teaching force goes well beyond student growth, and in fact is financially a "ticking time bomb...." He adds that the "main budget item in any school district is teacher's salaries. This just can't be sustainable."

It's undoubtedly true that some districts may lack teachers in certain areas like science and technology. As the National Council on Teacher Quality points out, workers in these fields earn higher salaries in the private sector. Accordingly, one solution would be to pay them more as a way to lure them into teaching. Of course, that's not doable because throughout much of the country – and certainly in California – we have a step-and-column pay regimen that allows no room for any flexibility in teacher pay.

To read more on the "shortage," go here –

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017072.pdf>

[http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher\\_Shortage\\_Fact\\_Sheet?utm\\_source=Press+-+Education&utm\\_campaign](http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher_Shortage_Fact_Sheet?utm_source=Press+-+Education&utm_campaign)

<https://www.the74million.org/article/analysis-have-we-hired-too-many-teachers-scholar-warns-of-economic-time-bomb/>

[http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2017/08/teaching\\_force\\_growing\\_faster\\_than\\_student\\_enrollment.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2017/08/teaching_force_growing_faster_than_student_enrollment.html)

Back in 1988, California decided that English should be taught via the "whole language" method. Students would read literature and "guess" at sounding out words. The result, early

literacy specialist Patrick Herrera writes, has been “a disaster from which California has not recovered.” He continues:

*The new focus: “return to phonics.” One study specified over 260 vowel and consonant sounds. Entrepreneurs and publishers responded with programs and games.*

*The problem with the materials was the “phonemic” approach. The programs were a confusing array of cards and booklets that confused both, teachers and learners.*

*Early linguists had also proposed a “syllabic” approach. I studied the syllabic method and developed a program: 11 lessons, two pages each. One page has single syllable words with basic vowel sounds and consonants. The facing page has illustrations that teach the vocabulary. Easy to teach and easy to learn. Simplicity is the key to effective learning.*

To learn more about Herrera’s approach, go to <http://phonicstoliteracy.com/>

The teachers unions continuously stress that charter schools “cherry-pick the students ... weeding out and turning down students with special needs.” However R Street Institute’s Steven Greenhut, citing a series of new reports, writes that the opposite is true.

*In one case, educators in the San Diego Unified School District have been counseling their students with low grade-point averages to transfer into charter schools, especially online charters, according to a Voice of San Diego report last month.*

*...This isn’t unique to San Diego. An investigative report this year by ProPublica found a “national pattern” in which public school districts have used alternative schools – many run by charter operators – as a “a silent release valve for high schools ... that are straining under the pressure of accountability reform.” These public schools can then “rid themselves of weak students whose test scores, truancy and risk of dropping out threaten their standing.” The situation is the opposite of “cherry picking.”*

To read the rest of Greenhut’s revealing piece, go to <http://www.rstreet.org/op-ed/cherry-picking-union-run-schools-dump-struggling-kids-on-charters/>

In New York City, the school district’s version of “Teacher Jail” is called the “Absent Teacher Reserve.” Some of these 800 or so teachers come from schools that have closed or whose jobs may have been eliminated. But many of them are incompetent, have checkered pasts and have sat around for years because no principal wants to hire them. Firing them, however, is next to impossible because of the teacher union contract. So all they do is sit and collect their paychecks and get yearly raises. Now NYC Mayor de Blasio is forcing principals to take these 800 undesirables and put them back in the classroom.

To learn more go to <https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2017/08/07/five-things-we-still-dont-know-about-who-is-in-new-york-citys-absent-teacher-reserve/> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/07/opinion/new-york-bad-teachers.html?mcubz=0>

A fascinating 16 minute video recently surfaced on the National Right to Work Committee website. Ben Johnson, former president of the Vermont AFL-CIO and the state chapter of the American Federation of Teachers, excoriates various union activities...and in very colorful take-no-prisoners terms.

On union euphemisms:

*When I was a union officer I was always ready to assure anyone who asked that we don't make anyone pay dues. No, of course not. It's only 'dues' when you want to pay it. When you have to pay it, and you do if you want to keep your job, we call it 'agency fees'. Nothing like a bureaucratic euphemism to soothe the conscience.*

On forced dues:

*On its face there is something screwy about the idea that an employer can take money from your paycheck against your will and give it to a private third party that you may want nothing to do with, and whose very existence you may oppose on philosophical, financial, or strategic grounds. It seems patently unjust.*

On union exclusive representation:

*...Unions choose to bargain contracts that cover the entire bargaining unit, members or not. They could bargain contracts that cover only members, and leave non-members to fend for themselves. Instead, unions fight for the right to cover the whole bargaining unit, then make non-members pay for it. That's fairness the union way.*

To access this provocative video, go here - <https://nrtwc.org/forced-dues-dooms-big-labor/>

Also on the subject of forced dues, the Heritage Foundation hosted a forum in late August on the constitutionality of compulsory union fees. Panelists included Center of Individual Rights President Terry Pell, past SCOTUS lead plaintiff and CTEN board member Rebecca Friedrichs and Association of American Educators Vice-President Colin Sharkey.

To view the one-hour video of the event, go here - <https://www.c-span.org/video/?432988-1/compulsory-union-fees-first-amendment-rights>

And a reminder: **Now is the time for agency fee payers to claim their rebate. Or if you are a full-dues payer but want to withhold the political share of your union dues, now is the time to get busy.** For details, go here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

Two weeks ago we sent you an email informing you of a new law in California that requires school districts to set meetings with newly-hired teachers and union representatives, and turn over private information on all employees to the unions for their unrestricted use, including making home visits.

Claiming the law is coercive, two attorneys are looking for plaintiffs who are willing to challenge it. Here is the letter we sent, which includes contact information for the lawyers.

Dear Colleague,

During the summer vacation, the California Legislature passed, and Governor Brown signed, a bill that requires school districts to set meetings with newly-hired teachers and union representatives, and turn over private information on all employees to the unions for their unrestricted use, including making home visits. Although this meeting requirement seems innocent, it's not.

State and union officials passed this bill as a preemptive response to *Janus v. AFSCME*, a case that may hold that public school teachers have a First Amendment right to choose whether to pay money to a labor union. California and unions are panicking that teachers will choose to exercise their right to not pay mandatory union dues after *Janus*. Thus, California is requiring school districts to allow labor unions to speak with new teachers so that the union will have an opportunity to get new teachers to sign union membership cards. If a teacher signs a union membership card, her union will often claim that she cannot exercise her First Amendment right to stop paying union dues for at least a full year.

These mandatory meetings have been implemented in other states, and often with concerning consequences. For instance, in Washington State, state officials reported that a local union bullied home healthcare workers into signing union membership cards. In one instance, a home healthcare worker told the union representatives at the mandatory meeting that she could not afford the union dues. Still, the union representatives harassed her until she was in tears and signed the membership card. Later on, when this home healthcare worker tried to leave the union, the union refused to stop taking her money because she had signed a membership card.

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and the Freedom Foundation are teaming up to take on California's new law before California teachers are coerced by labor. The Foundations are looking for new teachers who will be required to attend a union meeting or have their personal information provided to the union and receive home visits and want to challenge these new requirements.

Please contact Milton Chappell at [mlc@nrtw.org](mailto:mlc@nrtw.org) or Ray Nhan at [rnhan@freedomfoundation.com](mailto:rnhan@freedomfoundation.com) for more information.

If you are still using a school email to receive these newsletters, please consider sending us your personal email address. More and more school districts are blocking CTEN. In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them to be informative, please pass them 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