

THE OLYMPIAN

Published
February 19, 2007

Dear Editor:

James Kilpatrick writes in "Washington teachers [union] likely to come up short in court" (January 30) that Washington Education Association's attorney argued vigorously at the Supreme Court that the 'opt out' procedure available to nonunion teachers "unconstitutionally burdens the union's First Amendment right to engage in political advocacy."

In fact, West argued that the law requiring that nonunion members opt-in before the union can use their bargaining fees for politics was unconstitutional. Given a choice, the WEA loves the convoluted opt-out system, which results in the union retaining most of the 4,000 nonunion members' \$200-\$300 dues rebates. Kilpatrick mixed it up but so did the justices as they tried to keep the ridiculous system straight.

Most teachers remain in the dark about how to exercise their rights not to pay for union politics with their bargaining fees because union officials do all they can to obstruct teachers from knowing and exercising their rights, killing two bills in the state legislature that required notification of union opt-out rights and even suing teachers that tried to inform teachers of their rights.

When folks like Supreme Court justices and national journalists have difficulty keeping it straight, how can the "opt-out" system be a fair and reasonable system that protects teachers who are swamped?

Let's hope the justices honor nonunion teachers' First Amendment rights by ruling for a simple, convenient opt-in system.

Barbara Amidon
Vice President, Northwest Professional Educators

<http://159.54.227.3/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070219/OPINION02/702190318/1046/OPINION>