



FACT SHEET

National Institute for Labor Relations Research

5211 Port Royal Road, Suite 510 • Springfield, VA 22151 • Phone: (703) 321-9606 • Fax: (703) 321-7342 • research@nilrr.org • www.nilrr.org

August 18, 2008

Two Million K-12 Teachers Are Now Corralled Into Unions

And 1.3 Million Are Forced to Pay Union Dues, as Well as Accept Union Monopoly Bargaining

Education observers of all political stripes recognize that officials of the 3.2 million-member National Education Association and the 1.4 million-member American Federation of Teachers teacher unions, as well as officials of state and local NEA and AFT affiliates, wield enormous clout over how America's schools are run.

In a paper distributed last year, for example, Dr. Terry M. Moe, a political science professor at Stanford University and a prominent scholar in the field of education policy, concluded, citing his latest and previous research, that NEA and AFT union officers "use their power to shape the structure and ultimately the performance of government [schools]." ¹

Though Dr. Moe is known as a critic of teacher unions, this particular conclusion of his is basically noncontroversial. Several years ago, an article coauthored by veteran AFT researcher F. Howard Nelson similarly concluded that teacher union officials have substantial "leverage over conditions that impact school performance" ²

Before considering whether or not the enormous power over school management NEA and AFT union officials clearly possess is for good or for ill, it makes sense to ask from where it came. And a highly plausible place at which to look is state laws that authorize union officers to act as the "exclusive" bargaining agents over teachers and other school employees and also, in many cases, authorize the firing of educators who refuse to fork over dues or fees to an unwanted union.

"Exclusive" union bargaining, more properly referred to as monopoly bargaining, means that a single union has monopoly power to bargain with school officials over the pay, benefits,

¹ Terry M. Moe, "Collective Bargaining and the Performance of the Public Schools," May 2007. Go to <http://politicalscience.stanford.edu/faculty/moe.html> (Dr. Moe's page on the Stanford Department of Political Science web site) to download a free copy.

² F. Howard Nelson and Michael Rosen, "Are Teacher Unions Hurting American Education?" Institute for Wisconsin's Future, October 1996.

(continued on page 2)

and working conditions of all teachers, including union members and nonmembers alike, in the school district.

Teacher union officials wield relatively little clout (beyond what would be justified by their actual voluntary support) in the seven states with statutes on the books that either completely ban union monopoly bargaining over K-12 teachers in public schools, or strongly discourage it. In these seven states (Arizona, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia), an estimated 6% of teachers were under union monopoly-bargaining agreements as of 2005-2006.³

Teacher Union Bosses ‘Strongest’ In States Where They Have the Most Forced-Unionism Power

The roughly 722,000 K-12 public-school teachers in Arizona, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, just like teachers in the other 43 states, have a well-established legal and constitutional right to join and financially support a union that lobbies state and local elected officials on their behalf. But, except in relatively rare instances where school boards flout state policies opposing teacher monopoly bargaining, teachers in these states are not forced to accept a union as their bargaining agent.

* * * How much support do educators furnish for teacher unions in the states where union affiliation is, with relatively few exceptions, completely voluntary? Teachers in the seven states constitute roughly 23% of all teachers nationwide, but the dues collected by state and local NEA and AFT affiliates in these states constitute an estimated 4% of all dues collected by NEA and AFT affiliates.⁴ Based on the experience of these states, one may guess that, were teacher union officials granted no special coercive privileges in any state, they would together take in barely more than a sixth as much dues revenue nationwide as they now do.

* * * The same pattern pertains as one looks at groups of states where teacher union officials wield more forced-unionism power over teachers. Nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming) authorize neither teacher forced dues nor union monopoly bargaining over teachers, but also broadly permit school boards to grant union officials monopoly-bargaining privileges over teachers.

In these nine states, an estimated 24% of K-12 public-school teachers, compared to 65% nationwide, are corralled under union monopoly bargaining. Teachers in these states constitute just under 11% of all teachers nationwide, but collectively these states furnish NEA and AFT union officials with only roughly 5% of their total state and local dues revenue.

³ This estimate and several others that follow shortly are derived largely from data available on the web site <http://teacherunionexposed.com> and furnished by the Center for Union Facts and the National Center for Education Statistics (Students and Staffing Survey public file). The source for the number of K-12 public schoolteachers in each state is the Education Intelligence Agency.

⁴ *Ibid.*

- * * * Eleven other states (Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Tennessee) mandate teacher union monopoly bargaining under certain conditions, but prohibit the exaction of forced union dues from teachers.

Approximately 15% of U.S. teachers are employed in these states, and these states furnish NEA and AFT coffers with an estimated 8% of their aggregate state and local dues revenue.

- * * * Teacher union officials are by far the “strongest” in states where they have the most government-backed forced-unionism power. Twenty-three states statutorily authorize both monopoly bargaining and forced union dues in public schools.

These states (Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin) employ less than 52% of teachers nationwide. But they are the source of roughly 83% of all the state and local dues money collected by NEA and AFT affiliates.

Teacher Union Bosses Rake in An Estimated \$1.3 Billion a Year in Forced Dues, Fees

Not all unionized teachers in states with teacher forced-dues statutes are forced to pay union dues or fees to keep their jobs. Except in four states that mandate forced-dues school contracts (California, Hawaii, Minnesota, New York) and the District of Columbia, individual local school boards retain the option to resist union-boss entreaties to sell out teachers’ Right to Work. Most school boards that retain this option, unfortunately, do not exercise it, but some do.

For example, the Harrisburg-based group Pennsylvanians for Right to Work found, in a 2006 survey of Keystone State school districts, that 75% of K-12 public-school teachers are employed in districts that “deny . . . teachers their individual freedom of whether or not to join or support a union to remain in the classroom.” Only in three Pennsylvania counties -- Juniata, Mifflin, and Perry -- is the freedom of choice of all teachers protected.⁵

In Pennsylvania, all K-12 public-school teachers are unionized, according to National Center for Education Statistics data as reported by the Center for Union Facts. To estimate the number of forced-dues-paying teachers nationwide, the National Institute for Labor Relations Research conservatively assumes that, in all states with teacher forced-dues statutes that do not mandate forced dues, 75% of unionized teachers are forced to bankroll a union as a job condition.

In the handful of states (Colorado, Kentucky, Missouri, and West Virginia) that do not statutorily authorize teacher forced dues, but do not prohibit them either, the Institute conservatively assumes that 25% of unionized teachers are forced to pay union dues.

⁵ See <http://www.keyta.org/AgencyShop/Schools.aspx> for more information.

Using these conservative assumptions and the best available data, the Institute estimates that, of the 2.0 million teachers nationwide who are corralled under union monopoly-bargaining schemes, 1.3 million are forced to pay union dues or fees, or be fired. That's 43% of all K-12 public-school teachers nationwide.

Of course, NEA and AFT kingpins exact forced dues and fees not just from K-12 teachers, but also from hundreds of thousands of nonteaching support employees, as well as many higher education employees and other workers outside the field of education.

The Institute estimates that the NEA and AFT teacher unions and their subsidiaries rake in a total of \$1.3 billion a year in forced union dues and "agency" fees from teachers and other employees, and these forced dues and fees constitute roughly 65% of all dues and fees collected at all levels by the two teacher giants.

Because national teacher union officials do not make publicly available, or perhaps even maintain at all, data regarding the number of teachers and other employees in the NEA and AFT empires who are forced to pay union dues and how much they are forced to pay, the Institute is not in a position to offer more precise figures.

However, even rough, conservative estimates are enough to make it plain that NEA and AFT union officials are awash in dues revenue primarily because of state laws that empower them to force teachers and other public employees to accept a union as their monopoly-bargaining agent and pay union dues. And it is the dues revenue of roughly \$2 billion a year taken in by the NEA and AFT hierarchies that makes them powerhouses both in setting education policy and in electioneering.

It is not the purpose of this brief fact sheet to analyze the ways in which teacher union officials shape education policy (and other public policies far removed from education) as a result of their financial clout. But can a two-billion-a-year war chest derived overwhelmingly through the coercion of teachers and other employees really have a positive impact on our nation's schools? For anyone who believes in a free society, that is impossible to accept.

Student Enrollment Declines Present Challenge For Teacher Union Officials

Today, public-school teachers are far more apt to be subject to compulsory unionism than any other large group of employees. And the number of forced-dues-paying teachers keeps growing. Nevertheless, teacher union officials have ample reason to be concerned about the future.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the 27 states where teacher forced union dues are statutorily authorized or judicially sanctioned, the total number of five- to 17-year-olds fell by 676,000 between 2000 and 2006, the last year for which data are available.⁶

Meanwhile, the total number of five- to 17-year-olds in the 23 states (all 22 states with general Right to Work laws, plus Indiana, which has a teacher-only Right to Work law) where teacher forced union dues are barred grew by 894,000 during the same period.

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2001 (Table 20) and 2008 (Table 16) editions.

Because parents and prospective parents are fleeing in droves from forced-dues states and moving into Right to Work states, the number of school-aged children in forced-dues states has been declining for years and appears destined to continue declining for years to come. (Parents evidently find that Right to Work states, with their generally higher real incomes and lower living costs, are more attractive places to live.)

Up to now, the number of K-12 public-school teachers in forced-dues states has continued to increase, despite the fact that the market they serve is getting smaller, largely because of the outsized clout of the teacher union lobby.

However, there is a limit to how much money even the well-oiled NEA and AFT union machines can bilk out of taxpayers to hire more forced-dues-paying teachers when schools are closing for want of students.

That's why Right to Work supporters anticipate that in the near future teacher union officials will be redoubling their efforts to expand their forced-dues cash flow by repealing or gutting state Right to Work laws that are now on the books.

###