

# The CEA Voice

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## Community in Crisis Summit

The CEA Community in Crisis Summit began with CEA

President Tracey D. Johnson loudly and deliberately counting from one to eighteen. She then explained to the more than one hundred CEA members, administrators,



parents, students and community members their charge: Give voice to the circumstances that led to the deaths of eighteen current and former CCS students during this school year and formulate a unified mission to address the violence that is growing within Columbus neighborhoods.

Johnson and CEA's Social and Economic Justice Committee called the summit Mar. 23 to address concern about ongoing violence that has led to the deaths of our students. Spring Break would begin two days later, and the children of the community would be at heightened risk because of it. The most recent incidents were fresh in everybody's minds. On Mar. 4, a 7-year-old was killed; two 5-year-olds and a 4-year-old were injured. An 18-year-old gang member was charged with murdering the 7-year-old.

Johnson, with assistance from OEA facilitators, rallied groups of teachers, students, parents and activists around these questions:

- "What do you perceive as the root causes of violence in our communities?"
- "What direct impact has the violence had on you and your family?"
- "What are some possible solutions to stop the violence? What resources do we need?"
- "Who do we engage and influence in order to bring about the needed changes?"

The conversation quickly gathered momentum as each group began to map the answers. The responses covered a range of societal ills: poverty, racism, substance abuse, generational disconnect, easy access to guns, lack of sufficient afterschool programming, very young parents, media messaging, absent fathers and a growing mistrust within communities of color. Attendees included school board members, fellow CEA members, CCS administrators and members from the community, each with personal experiences around violence and its after-effects. A former student explained what it was like growing up with violence as a response to conflict and mistrust of the public authorities who were supposed to protect him and his family.

Open discussion produced a number of solutions that will take time to achieve; greater community investment in neglected neighborhoods; efforts to encourage payment of a living wage; instruction in conflict resolution; parenting-skills education; adequate and accessible mental health services and the defunding of ineffective public programs.

Johnson assured the summit attendees that this is not about talk. The group collectively created a pledge to guide further

work on the issues. Everyone present was asked to sign the pledge to continue his or her involvement.

The CEA Social and Economic Justice Committee will be calling further gatherings to look at the mission, grow the movement and plan activities that can lead to positive change.

"We're not going to find a solution today," said Johnson. "What I'm talking about is changes that will be lifetime changes for our community. And that's going to take a long time to happen, but we have to start somewhere."

Want to get involved? Join us at the next Social and Economic Justice Committee meeting on Tuesday, Apr. 26, at 4:30 p.m. at OEA Headquarters, 225 E. Broad Street.

## OEA Applauds Supreme Court Decision To Reaffirm Collective Bargaining

*As published by the Ohio Education Association*

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Supreme Court today affirmed that public employers have a compelling interest in having strong and effective collective bargaining. The 4–4 decision in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* leaves intact the sound law of *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* that has been working for nearly four decades.

At issue in *Friedrichs* was whether non-union members could share the wages, benefits and protections negotiated in a collectively bargained contract without needing to pay their fair share for the cost of those negotiations. The case was brought by the Center for Individual Rights, an organization funded by corporate special interests that are pushing their own agenda. The National Education Association, the nation's largest union with more than three million members, and the California Teachers Association, are two of the union respondents in the case in addition to the state of California. The Ohio Education Association (OEA) is NEA's Ohio affiliate.

"We welcome today's decision," said OEA President Becky Higgins. "But we're under no illusion that the threat posed by *Friedrichs* is over. There are some thirty similar cases making their way through the courts and any one of them could well make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. All of this underscores the importance of this year's elections for President and the U.S. Senate, and the resulting ability to fill the current and any future vacancy on the Supreme Court."

"The U.S. Supreme Court today rejected a political ploy to silence public employees like teachers, school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, higher education faculty and other educators to work together to shape their profession," said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. "In *Friedrichs*, the court saw through the political attacks on the workplace rights of teachers, educators and other public employees. This decision recognizes that stripping public employees of their voices in the workplace is not what our country needs."

The case was thinly veiled attempt to weaken collective bargaining and silence educators' voices. In response, hundreds of amici curiae or "friends of the court" briefs weighed in to support the union respondents. Twenty-one states, dozens of cities, nearly fifty Republican lawmakers, school districts and public hospitals

rose in support of the value fair share fees provide in terms of the effective management of public services. During oral arguments, lawyers for the respondents argued that the current fair share system is a good compromise and common sense solution. Ohio is a fair share fee state. The court's decision today left that system in place nationwide.

"I'm thrilled millions of educators like me can continue to work together through their unions to advocate for the best teaching and learning conditions of their students," said HaSheen Wilson, a network administrator at Youngstown State University and OEA member. "In an era when the rich just get richer while the poor seem to fall through the cracks, we need to come together and speak out for change—whether it's smaller class sizes, training for educators, fair pay and benefits, healthcare or safer work environments."

The Friedrichs case provided a vivid illustration of what's at stake when it comes to the highest court in the land. It also was an example of how special interests are using the Supreme Court for political agendas rather than what the court was intended: interpreting and upholding the Constitution.

## CEA/Capital Leadership Academy

On Saturday, Apr. 30, CEA and Capital District is sponsoring its first CEA/Capital Leadership Academy at the Hyatt Regency Columbus from 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. This event is free for CEA members and is a great opportunity to learn and grow professionally. Lunch will be provided, and CEUs will be awarded. We will also raffle off some great door prizes.

Members can select from four strands:

- **Emerging Leader**—This strand is designed for those who are new to leadership and want to grow as leaders.
- **Organizing**—This strand is for those who want to advocate for the profession and gain understanding about the importance of messaging and how to organize those around them.
- **Social Justice**—This strand is for members interested in advocating for their students and communities on issues that impact their lives outside of the classroom.
- **Cultural Competency**—This strand will help members gain awareness on how to work with students from diverse backgrounds and gain appreciation of what our students bring to the classroom.

We hope that every school/unit will have at least three members represented at the academy. To register, go to the Eventbrite link at <http://bit.ly/23bnOE3>.

## Re-elect Tim Myers To STRS

The State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) is the foundation to our members' economic security in retirement. It is important that Ohio's teachers are represented by dedicated, knowledgeable members on the STRS Board. The Ohio Education Association has endorsed Tim Myers for reelection to the STRS Board.

Myers has served on the STRS Board as a representative of active teachers since 2009. Tim also currently serves as the Ohio Education Association Secretary-Treasurer. He is a middle school science teacher from Elida, Ohio, with 35 years of experience. In addition to being an OEA officer and STRS Board member, he has the following qualifications:

- Fully certified in the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plan's training on Pensions and Health Care
  - Represented OEA on the NEA taskforce on GPO/WEP (Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision)
  - Member of Harvard's Trustee Leadership Forum/Institute on Responsible Investing
  - Former Chair of the NEA Trustee Caucus
- Myers has been a valuable voice in promoting the well-being of



**Tim Myers**

members, both active and retired, while addressing the critical issues that face the long-term funding of the pension system.

Election packets were mailed from STRS on Apr. 1 and contain instructions to cast your vote using the Internet, phone or mail. The deadline for voting is May 2.

## CEA Awards and Retirement

Retirees will soon be receiving invitations to one of CEA's most memorable events: the Annual CEA Awards & Retirement Banquet. At this hallmark event, CEA will honor those who have dedicated their lives to this noble profession, present several awards and honor students who have received scholarships. This year's dinner will be held Saturday, May 21, in the ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Columbus, 350 N. High Street. Tickets, free to retirees and to Senior FRs, are \$35 for guests.

Each year, we hear from teachers and Association members who have contributed so much to improve the lives of our students. CEA will honor the Innovator in Education, Outstanding Faculty Representatives and Outstanding Member and Friend of Education. In addition, we will award scholarships to children of members including the CEA General Scholarship, John E. Grossman Memorial Scholarship for a South HS graduating senior and the Rhonda Johnson Scholarship.

We would love to see you at this year's banquet. To make reservations, return the reservation card and the information sheet you receive via U.S. Mail to CEA. Call CEA at (614) 253-4731 for more information.

## Few Aim To Teach: But Unions Can Help

A 2016 national survey of college freshmen has revealed that the number of students who say they will major in education is at its lowest point in 45 years. NEA reported that a survey by UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program shows just 4.2 percent intend to major in education—a typical first step to becoming a teacher—compared to 11 percent in 2000, 10 percent in 1990 and 11 percent in 1971. Take those numbers and add them to the poor rates of teacher retention in many public schools, and it equals a serious problem for students who all deserve a "caring, qualified and committed educator," as NEA President Lily Eskelsen García says. "There's no question that something must change—and quickly."

But the solutions are no mystery, she added. Increase pay for teachers, she urged. Make college affordable and broaden access to federal loan forgiveness programs for educators. Support the U.S. Senate Democrats' *RED* Act. Support efforts to revamp undergraduate programs so that faculty can help their students get skills and experiences in K–12 classrooms as early as possible. Fight for greater respect for educators. Support your Association's voice in administrative affairs. The most important aspect of educating future teachers is showing them what it means to be in a teachers' union. There, they will find their advocates.

## Special Notes

- ❑ Article 211 Round 2 postings will open on Monday, Apr. 18, and will close Friday, Apr. 22. Interviews for Round 2 are from Monday, Apr. 25, through Thursday, Apr. 28. The Job Fair will take place on Wednesday, May 11, at the Hudson Distribution Center.
- ❑ The deadline for CEA Scholarship Application is Friday, Apr. 22, 5 p.m. Eligible high school seniors must have a proven cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5, be children or grandchildren of CEA or CEA-R members and be full-time students while enrolled in college. Go to <http://bit.ly/1mYfb3I> to download an application, or call the CEA office at (614) 253-4731.
- ❑ The next CEA Social and Economic Justice Committee meeting is Tuesday, Apr. 26, 4:30 p.m., at OEA Headquarters. The SEJC is concentrating on finding ways to reduce neighborhood violence.
- ❑ Catastrophic Leave Donation Request: Anita Allen, Jill Harrington, Leroy Koepfinger and Jaime Martin are in need of donated days. To donate, enter your name at the top of the CCS "Report of Employee Absence" form. In the "Comments" section write the words, "Catastrophic Sick Leave Donation." Be sure that you and your principal or supervisor sign the form. Indicate on the form which individual you would like your donation directed toward.