

The CEA Voice

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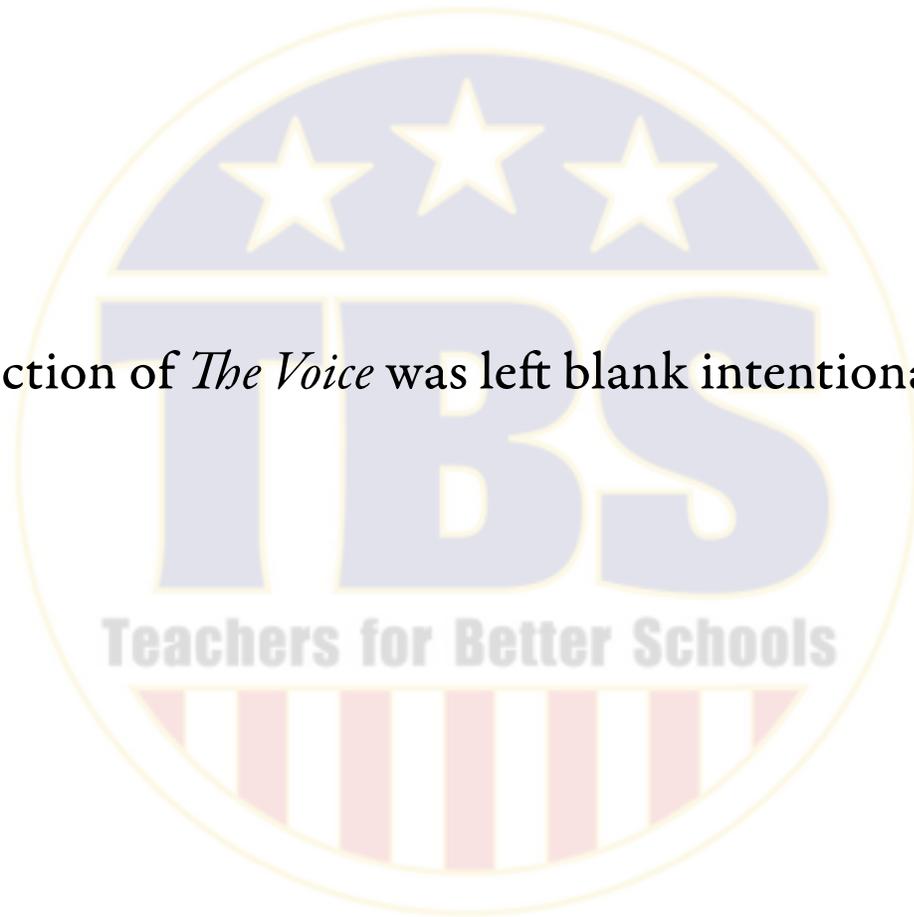
Columbus Education Association

September 19, 2016

Vote Pro-Education

The General Election is coming in November and early voting begins October 12. We will elect national, state and local representatives who will have the power to make decisions on behalf of the nation's teachers. The following is the list of candidates and issues endorsed by the CEA Legislative Assembly:

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CEA Special Fall Election

A special 2016 Fall Election will be held to fill the following two positions: Middle School Governor At-Large #1 (to complete the unexpired term ending in 2017) and Middle School Governor At-Large #2 (full three-year term). Members may declare their candidacy from Oct. 10 to Oct. 21. Campaigning begins Oct. 10 and ends Nov. 15. Voting begins Nov. 1 and ends Nov. 15; votes will be tallied Nov. 16. In the event of a fall run-off election, campaigning will begin Nov. 17 and end Dec. 13. Voting begins Nov. 29 and ends Dec. 13; votes will be tallied Dec. 14.

We Are All In This Together

A year of challenge. A year of engagement. That is school year 2016-2017.

CEA President Tracey D. Johnson urged the Association's Faculty Representatives (FRs) to talk to members about getting involved in the work of the Association, in the work of promoting the upcoming levy, and in the effort to support pro-education candidates, regardless of political affiliation.

Addressing the Association's FRs and Governors at the school year's opening Legislative Assembly on Sept. 8, Johnson thanked teachers for their hard work to ensure a positive start to the school year. "There's a lot going on this year," stated Johnson, "that will test the strength of this Association. You will see our willingness to engage our membership at a deeper level."

In November, the voters will be asked to approve Issue 57, a 6.92-mill tax increase for the district. Issue 57 represents an increase of \$242 per year against the valuation of a typical Columbus district home. The ballot issue includes the sale of bonds for district repairs. It also includes \$49.7 million dollars to hire 325 new staff, including teachers, over the next five years.

"The campaign is about more than money," said Johnson. "It is about all of us. It is about our students." The gathered delegates observed 27 seconds of silence for the untimely passing of the 27 students this past year-17 were due to acts of violence.

Johnson encouraged FRs to educate members about their part in the effort to educate the public about the upcoming levy. "Teachers are the most trusted individuals in the city when it comes to this issue," she said. "Let's tell our good story."

CEA Vice President Phil Hayes emphasized that service and commitment to the values of the Association are CEA's greatest assets. "Not one thing in this Contract was given to us," Hayes said. He added that members must not take the Contract for granted. "You are the guardians of the Contract," he said.

Insurance Plan Update

CCS has a self-funded insurance plan. In this type of insurance plan, claims are paid from the money collected for members' insurance benefits. Claims are only paid out when they occur. If claims are consistently lower than expected, money collected from members' insurance premiums remain in reserve. Higher-than-expected claims result in a quicker depletion of the self-funded plan reserve and cause future premium costs to increase.



Due to our bargaining unit members' increased usage of the self-funded insurance as well as higher-than-expected claims, the amount required to fund expenses for 2017 from the CCS self-funded insurance plan will amount to an 8.2 percent increase in premiums.

After investigating a number of plan design changes to lower members' premium increases, the Joint Insurance Committee declined to make any plan design changes at this time. The proposed changes would have slightly lowered premiums; but members would have faced increased copays for primary care, specialist, urgent care and emergency room visits, increased out-of-pocket maximums and a wide-ranging and massively disruptive prescription drug plan retooling. The proposed changes would have cost CEA bargaining unit members more money out of pocket than they would have actually saved in premium reductions in the 2017 calendar year.

Here are some drivers for the escalation in cost of claims for members of the CEA bargaining unit.

Price inflation has caused an increase in the cost of goods and services of health care providers. New medical techniques and more aggressive treatments of conditions also have resulted in an increase of costs for members.

Ongoing changes in STRS benefits over the past few years have resulted in a higher number of retiring employees who have used CCS insurance for high-cost claims prior to enrolling in STRS insurance.

Fifty-one certificated members, less than a half of a percent of total claimants, were responsible for one quarter of the entire cost for medical claims in 2015. These claims amounted to slightly more than \$12 million of the total \$48 million medical cost claims.

Life's unexpected events can threaten a family in more ways that you can imagine. A diagnosis of cancer, a disabling injury, a stroke or a heart attack could be devastating. Fortunately, the insurance benefits in CCS protect your family and your financial security. These increases in premiums will be difficult, but they leave you in a better position than your peers in other school districts and in the public and private sector.

Negotiations Input

The CEA/Board Agreement will be expiring August 20, 2017. Now is the time to organize our priorities, and the CEA Bargaining Team would like your input. The team will be hosting two Town Hall meetings this fall. These meetings will allow every CEA member the opportunity to submit proposals to be considered for the negotiations survey. The first town hall meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 28, at The Boat House Restaurant, 679 W. Spring Street, beginning at 4:30 pm. Refreshments will be available. Please contact Teri Mullins at the CEA office, (614) 253-4731, or tmullins@ceaohio.org to RSVP.

Be sure to check the next two issues of *The CEA Voice* for a special tear-off form that will also allow members to submit issues/concerns to be considered for the negotiations survey.



Special Notes:

- Consider donating some of your sick leave for those who may need it in the future. Contribute by filling out the Sick Leave Bank enrollment form (<http://bit.ly/slbapp>) by September 30. The district will deposit two of your sick days in to the bank. Those who need it may borrow up to 10 days. Borrowed sick leave must be repaid to the bank by the time you leave the district. Your initial deposit of two sick days will be refunded once you leave the district. Fill out the form and send it to CEC, Route 1. Remember to keep a copy for your records.
- Help CEA join the fight against breast cancer. Register for the Making Strides Walk, scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 23, starting from COSI, 333 W. Broad St. Free registration begins at 8:30 a.m. Create your own team, or join ours, the CEA Dream Team. Go to www.makingstrideswalk.org/columbus to register. List Columbus Education Association as your team company. Be one of the first thirty people to register by calling Ezzetta Murray at (614) 253-4731 and get a free T-shirt.
- CEA Member Scholarships are available for your college senior. Distributed through The Columbus Foundation, this fund provides \$1,250 in tuition assistance. Only CEA members who have taught in CCS for the past four years are eligible. Your student must have at least a 2.0 GPA in order to apply. The deadline to receive the application is 5 p.m., Friday, Oct. 21. Go to www.ceaohio.org to download an application. Call Kathy Wilkes at (614) 253-4731, if you have questions.