



PEI

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF IOWA

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As you all know, the Wisconsin collective bargaining law is being closely scrutinized and possibly eliminated. The "union relatives" in Iowa are now staging their own sympathy protests on Tuesday, February 22. We are getting inquiries about what this would do to Iowa and how much of the information is accurate that is coming across from standard and alternative media.

Here is our perspective on what we know so far. Language is critical and assumptions of what it means get horribly skewed. For instance, when the Iowa unions talk about public employees they represent, the fact is that they really are worrying about their organization and not the individual employees. There is a bill right now that changes some of the Iowa code for bargaining on insurance. The ISEA wants it to read that it is bargained. We agree, if in fact it is bargained including ALL THE TEACHERS and not just the union teachers. In the race to the top bill, one of the problems was the negotiation of unions. Teacher input is important for all, but not union-exclusive teacher input. Keeping this principle in mind, remember that in Iowa teachers can opt-out from the union and their dues because we are a "Right to Work" state. Wisconsin is not. All teachers in a union controlled district must join in Wisconsin. That makes them captives to the union.

As a professional association, PEI understands that it takes everyone working together to improve public schools. We believe education improves when the state demonstrates a strong commitment to local control. Furthermore, PEI believes strikes and walkouts are detrimental to students and to the reputation of teachers. We are dedicated to improving education through collaboration, not conflict. The fact that union collective bargaining negotiations exclude other parties means that we have a political process from which various parties are blatantly excluded. It limits freedom of speech. By controlling the collective bargaining process, the teacher unions control the pace of change while dictating what those changes will be, whether or not they are in the interest of the teachers they represent.

Calling in sick as protest to legislation when a teacher is not sick, is a blatant example of lying for personal gain. When a district has a block of "sick teachers" and they can't have school that is not good for education by example or by contract to the public. Any union that condones "sickouts" must have a moral base that is certainly not compatible with the PEI Code of Ethics (as can be seen on our website).

Recently we saw two more districts, Moravia and Earlham, vote to remove the union. The basis for the move is to put into play an independent local association that is all inclusive with the entire staff as opposed to only allowing union members to vote on the contract. If Wisconsin operated in a similar manner, they possibly would not have the issues that they currently have.

State government must ensure that local school districts provide equal opportunity to all organizations and that state or local policies do not otherwise violate the mandate for neutrality. It is an unfair practice for a taxpayer funded employer or entity to interfere, restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of their rights to join a union, but it is also inappropriate to keep those same employees from potentially joining a competing organization. In this regard, an employer which knowingly provides a teacher union with use of its facilities or internal mail or email for an organizational or political campaign should also make those accommodations uniformly available to a competing organization.

In the end, elected officials cannot ignore the fact that traditional collective bargaining usually leads to work stoppages, strikes, lockouts, sickouts - all of which hurts kids. We only have to witness the recent events in Wisconsin to witness that truth. In the public sector, these tactics simply do not work very well. In too many instances, staff or programs must be cut to live up to the terms of the contract if taxpayers don't fund any increases that are agreed to. There has to be a more professional way.

PEI is very much in favor of a national "Right to Work" law that gives all employees the right to opt out of union dues. Wisconsin has gotten out of control with unions that are out of step with the public needs and budgets, and now they are suffering the consequences of their power grab. This is how I see it with the information I currently possess. As the story unfolds, I will be in touch if there are facts that we have not been privileged to know.

In the following interview, MSNBC threw anything but softballs at WI Governor, Scott Walker. See what you think. Oh yes, just what insurance company does the Wisconsin Teachers union demand that the districts have to buy from? THEIRS!

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41703174/ns/us_news-life/?GT1=43001

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