

NSO Contact

National Staff Organization

June 2011

Legislative crises, emerging issues to take RA center stage

The ongoing legislative attacks on unions, public employees and their rights will be the RA focus on Friday, June 10.

The stage will be set by Bill Raabe, NEA Director of Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy, in his keynote address detailing the national outlook on union attacks. Wisconsin NSO members will give the Assembly an update on their state's crisis situation.

The entire RA delegation will then break into small groups for facilitated discussions on strategy and the future of unions across the country.

"The discussions will give representatives from each state an opportunity to share their stories and talk about strategies that are working," said Lynn Adler, Vice President for Program.

The NSO Executive Committee is committed to helping states deal with unprecedented legislative attacks on collective bargaining, pension and benefits—on their very existence.

NSO President Chuck Agerstrand commented, "Never before have public employee unions been so demonized. We felt



RA delegates will vote on new officers and a dues increase

The RA will be making at least two important business decisions regarding NSO: a dues increase and seats on the Executive Committee.

In March, Ron Goldenstein, NSO Treasurer, recommended to the Executive Committee a budget that includes a \$5 dues increase for professional staff members and a \$3 dues increase for associate staff members. The Executive Committee adopted the proposal and will be forwarding it on to the RA for a vote.

RA delegates also will be voting on NSO Executive Committee Director positions that will represent Regions 1, 3, 5 and 7 and two At-Large Directors. Those elected will serve a two-year term beginning June 11, 2011 and ending June 15, 2013.

The NSO Executive Committee has recommended a bylaw amendment change that will establish NSO-Retired as an NSO program with its own dues and fee schedule. The proposal will give a seat on the Executive Committee to an NSO-Retired representative.

RA schedule includes time for networking

New attendees to the RA will meet on June 9 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. to get acquainted with NSO officers and Executive Committee members and become familiar with NSO goals and policies. This is an opportunity for new delegates to network with delegates from other states who are also representing their states for the first time at the RA.

On Friday, after the first day of RA business, NSO will host its annual Solidarity Reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for all NSO delegates.

New documentary probes why teachers so undervalued

A rebuttal to *Waiting for Superman* is made its appearance in preview screenings in Washington, D.C. and New York, The new film, *American Teacher*, was produced by the Teacher Salary Project, an interactive online resource that investigates the nation's educational crisis.

Matt Damon narrates the documentary which tries to answer the question, "Why are teachers in the United States so undervalued and lately even disparaged?"

The film was produced by Dave Eggers and Ninive Clement Calegari, a former teacher who helped Eggers create the 826 National tutoring centers. The movie looks to counteract popular misconceptions about the teaching profession by showing what teachers actually do and what their lives are really like.

Eggers and Clegari put the spotlight on five teachers from different parts of the country and intersperse their story with commentaries and statistics on the teaching profession.

To view a film clip and learn more about the Teacher Salary Project, go to www.theteachersalaryproject.org.

Help for Missouri NEA tornado victims

If you are interested in helping members impacted by the Joplin tornado, please make donations to Missouri NEA's HOPE Fund. Go to <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/ClassroomsKids1/5.aspx>. to learn more about the fund and how to make a donation.

Lessons learned from Labor/Management Summit critical now as unions face unprecedented challenges

“As you go, so goes the rest of us and if you don’t figure it out, God help us!”

Those words of Sue Schurman, to the attendees of the March Labor/Management Summit, set the tone for the two-day event that brought representatives from management and staff together to deal with the shift in the environment in which we work.

Her words still connect today as states across the country are facing threats to union and collective bargaining rights and devastating budget cuts.

Schurman describes the NEA as “the trade union for teachers.” She points out that trade unions are the oldest and longest living proponents of the civil rights movement. They’ve used their power to advance economic and political interests.

“Trade unions like the NEA have based their power on the idea that labor shouldn’t be a commodity. It’s about people. But we’re moved to power being based on capitalism that is using new strategies that fly in the face of trade unions,” Schurman noted.

And why these current attacks on unions?

“Unions are standing in the way of the private sector,” Schurman noted.

Schurman pointed out that since 2005, unions hoped for a political solution to the state of transition we find ourselves in. It’s a state of economic inequality in growth, career instability, a focus on institutions rather than people and scapegoating—especially of public employees and their unions.

There became a massive loss of trust in labor organizations. The public voted for smaller government and union members themselves lost faith in their own organizations.

Teachers became prime targets for the private sector. Why? There’s money in education in the form of charters and vouchers. Public sector compensation is generally higher than in the private sector. Many Americans had bad schooling experiences. And in the eyes of the wealthy, public schools were becoming too good and too expensive.

According to Schurman, unions can’t continue to defend the status quo. They have to reinvent themselves around issues of fairness and quality. They have to offer a new vision—one that carries the union label. And union leaders have to shift their focus to being about their members.

“Labor organization management has to put its members first. The change process has to be based on the core values of fairness and equity,” cautioned Schurman.

She went on to warn that we’re capable of destroying ourselves. We no longer can organize solely on the basis of more compensation or better benefits. Organizing issues should center on core values of members.

“Our unions have to lead and provide a vision for quality,” urged Schurman.

To echo the purpose of the Labor/Management Summit, Schurman quoted the words of Abraham Lincoln in his address to Congress in Dec. 1862:

“We can succeed only in concert. It is not ‘can any of us imagine better?’ but ‘can we all do better?’ The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise—with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

[Schurman is currently the Dean of the Rutgers University College Community and a union advocate.](#)



At the March Labor/Management Summit, key-noter Susan Schurman points out that Wisconsin showed us that solidarity is one source of power for workers.

2011 tests union strength, solidarity as affiliates take on bargaining

“Do not only point out the way, but lead the way.” – wise words of a Sioux Indian proverb and surely a goal that bargainers for the 27 state staff contracts expiring in 2011 want to achieve.

The 27 don't include affiliates like Michigan and AFSE who continue to bargain. Michigan affiliates have been bargaining for a new contract since theirs expired Sept. 2010. Economic issues dominate the negotiations as staff undergoes a second reduction in force. The first staff reduction went into effect last Dec.

With a May 31 deadline approaching, AFSE continues to fight substantial management proposals for concessions. Management has never indicated that the organization could not afford to meet the proposals offered by staff. While there have been some tentative agreements reached on non-economic issues that preserve current contract language, economic issues remain unsolved.

“It's ironic that NEA management calls for collaboration on fighting the attacks on members, but they can't show the same collaborative spirit at the bargaining table with their own employees,” said NSO President Chuck Agerstrand.

Starting in July, 27 state contracts will expire.

The list includes:

Arkansas	Mississippi
Colorado	Missouri (ASO)
Connecticut (ASO)	Montana
Delaware	New Mexico
Florida	North Dakota
Georgia	Oregon
Hawaii	Rhode Island
Iowa (2 affiliates)	Tennessee (PSO)
Kansas (ASO)	Utah
Louisiana	Virginia (ASO)
Maine	Washington
Maryland (ASO)	West Virginia (2 affiliates)
Massachusetts (3 affiliates)	Wyoming
Minnesota (2 affiliates)	

A noon time rally at NEA brought together employees and retired staff in support of the AFSE team bargaining with NEA management. Check out a photo slideshow from the event at <http://bit.ly/ijcUYi>.

News from the states

Unfortunately, the list of states facing drastic education budget cuts or attacks on union rights and collective bargaining continues to grow.

With the upcoming RA's focus on political attacks and union activity across the country, here's a state-by-state update of legislative activity as of May 30.

Alabama – An Anti-Tenure Bill impacting teacher dismissal policies, the appeals process and other tenure issues now heads to the governor for signature.

Arizona – AEA has filed a lawsuit contesting the constitutionality of SB 1365 which eliminates payroll deduction.

Idaho – Because signature gatherers reached their goal, repeal of laws restricting collective bargaining rights, teacher merit pay and a Laptop for Teachers bill which shifts money from salaries to classroom technology will be on the Nov. 2012 ballot.

Illinois – A House Committee approved SB512 to cut pension benefits for active participants in state retirement systems; Republicans, declaring redistricting maps unfair, presented their own plan that probably has no chance in a Democratic-controlled legislature; there is still no compromise on a budget which is due July 1.

Louisiana – A bill to eliminate tenure for bus drivers was defeated.

Maine – Public sector Right to Work will resurface in a scheduled committee hearing.

Massachusetts – The approved-Senate version of the state budget narrows the ability to negotiate health benefits; the House version stripped away members' ability to bargain health care benefits.

Michigan – Ahead of schedule, lawmakers approved a budget that cuts \$1 billion from K-12, 15 percent from community colleges and universities and \$470 per K-12 pupil; recall petitions for the governor, Republican legislators and the Emergency Manager legislation continue to circulate; legislation to force public employees to pay a minimum of 20 percent of their health care and/or a hard cap and eliminate tenure are still pending.

Minnesota – Gov. Dayton vetoed all Republican budget bills; preparations are underway for a government shutdown on July 1; Gov. vetoed SF170 which requires teachers to pass a basic skills test before licensing, but he still wants significant changes in standards for teaching candidates.

Nebraska – Changes to the Commission on Industrial Relations maintains collective bargaining rights; lawmakers approved new congressional and legislative maps that strengthen the GOP's edge in the U.S. House.

Nevada – The Senate Education Committee passed two Democratic-supported bills making it easier to fire underperforming teachers and administrators; Republicans opposed the bills because it "conceded too much to unions."

New Hampshire – The House postponed a vote to override the governor's veto of a Right to Work bill because they didn't have the votes.

New Jersey – The state's Supreme Court ordered the state to spend an additional \$500 million on public education next year in poor districts; the decision stems from a legal battle over whether Gov. Christie's cuts to education were unconstitutional; the decision does not boost funding statewide; a balanced state budget is due July 1.

New York – A Democrat won the special congressional election in a strong Republican district; a bill to impose a 2 percent property tax cap that would greatly impact school budgets has been introduced.

North Carolina – The Senate version of the budget looks better than the House version but includes merit pay; the bill to do away with dues deduction for NCAE passed the State Senate Rules Committee.

Ohio – Michelle Rhee and Student First hired a lobbyist to work on Gov. Kasich's legislation that stripped collective bargaining rights of police, firefighters and teachers; the law prevents unions from negotiating wages, eliminates automatic pay increases and bans strikes; signature gathering for the governor's recall continues with 230,000 signatures needed by the June 30 deadline.

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Pennsylvania – The House version of the budget has been passed which cuts about \$500 million from education and keeps the budget surplus intact; the governor wanted more in cuts.

Rhode Island – The House Speaker and Senate President are in favor of a Special Session to make significant pension system changes.

South Carolina – The State House defeated a voucher bill.

Tennessee – Anti-collective bargaining legislation passed and was sent to the governor; the bill prohibits teachers from collectively bargaining over issues like class size, school schedules, pay rates, teacher assignment, and evaluations.

Texas – A state budget which cuts \$4 billion from education while keeping \$6 billion in the Rainy Day Fund intact moves to the full House and Senate for anticipated votes.

Wisconsin – A Dane Co. judge struck down Gov. Walker's anti-collective bargaining law.

NSO Executive Committee

President – Chuck Agerstrand

Vice President for Defense – Marius Ambrose

Vice President for Program – Lynn Adler

Treasurer – Ron Goldenstein

Secretary – Mary Henson

Region 1 – Cheryl Singleton

Region 2 – Butch Santicola

Region 3 – Emmitt Jimmar

Region 4 – John Stephens

Region 5 – Kathy Hill

Region 6 – Michael Coleman

Region 7 – Catherine Alexander

At Large-A – Robert Blackwell

At Large-B – Patrick Chavez

Comptroller—Vera Stafford

Communications – Rosemary Carey

Web – Miriam Garcia

Check out the web site,
www.nationalstaff.org for the latest news
and updates on bargaining.
