

Dear Colleagues,

You may have recently received a mailer, a phone call or even a visit at home from an anti-public education political group encouraging you to drop your membership in the LOCAL Education Association and WEA. From the talk I had with one of them, they are only giving you the half-truth. They quickly left when I told them that I was one of the union officers and knew all about it.

The Freedom Foundation is part of a broader national campaign to weaken educators' rights and attack public education. There are several states that are "right to work" states and currently are non-union. From what I have heard from correspondence with some of the teachers, their conditions and pay are poor and unpredictable.

I do understand that there is concern that we do not want our dues to go towards political purposes, and no matter what, the NEA does contribute an extremely small amount of their taking towards mailing and information for political needs, but WEA and SEA do not contribute any of your dues to political campaigns. We have a WEA-PAC donation that you must sign up for if you want to contribute politically. Unfortunately, education has become a political arena, which it should not be.

Strong local union membership builds our power so our voices are heard at the bargaining table and in the political arena. Non-members lose their voice in union issues. They cannot vote on the contract or other important issues that affect us at work.

It is no coincidence this group contacted members of our union right after a legislative session that added billions of dollars in new revenue to fund basic education and major increases in educator pay. WEA members in every local association, including ours, will have the opportunity to decide their priorities and help shape the new pay system at the local level. Collective bargaining will be essential, and union representation and membership will be critical.

I would urge you not to fall into the pit that the Freedom Foundation is setting before you and if contacted and you need more information to call your executive board for information.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me, or your local building representative.

Thank you,

Kevin Russell

Executive Secretary-SEA