



Ski Country Educator

March – April 2011

Under Attack!

I assume you have been following the news from Wisconsin. The new governor has taken bargaining rights away from certain groups of public employees, including teachers and classified school employees. They can only bargain salary, and they cannot bargain for any increase greater than the current cost of living. Similar legislation is being proposed in other states including Colorado.

In the last few years teachers have been blamed for everything that is wrong with public education. Now, along with our fellow support professionals, we are being blamed for the recession. Governors and legislators across the nation are trying to sell to local tax payers that our health benefits and pension plans are much too generous. Not to mention salary and working conditions. And in order to do something about it, we must end collective bargaining.

If you haven't already figured this out, what we are experiencing is a coordinated effort to limit or do away with bargaining rights for public school employees – so that elected officials will “have the tools” to balance their budgets; on the backs of public employees.

If there were ever a time for you to get involved in defending public employee rights - this it!

Contact Governor Hickenlooper and your House and Senate Representatives and let them know that salaries for public school employees in Colorado are already below the national average. Tell them that the benefits and pensions for public workers are no greater than those in the private sector.

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Let no crisis go to waste - Elections have consequences

To quote Rahm Emanuel, former white house chief of staff to Barak Obama - “don’t waste a good crisis”. And to quote both Barak Obama and Governor of Wisconsin Scott Walker – “elections have consequences”.

The fight in Wisconsin and other states over public employee bargaining rights, health benefits, and pension plans is a perfect example of these two quotes. The recent budget crisis in Wisconsin, Colorado, and most every other state is giving conservatives the opportunities they have long wished for; the opportunity to attack public employees, and to eventually privatize all of public education.

Steve Forbes, former presidential candidate, and editor in chief of Forbes Magazine argues in reference to the crisis battering local U.S. governments that “a lot of good may come”. He lists the opportunities that the crisis creates for conservatives:

It’s an opportunity to:

- Gut public employee pensions
- Sack public schools and replace them with for profit charters
- Dismantle Medicaid and replace with vouchers (so the poor and disabled can bear the burden of rising costs)

In this current session of the Colorado Legislature we have seen bills to shift more of the cost of PERA on to employees. A bill was introduced to outlaw collective bargaining for public employees. There is also a bill to allow for tax vouches to go to parents who send their kids to private schools, including church affiliated schools. This bill also provides a tax credit for home schools. Luckily the majority in the Senate and the Governor are allies to public employees and public schools. If both houses of the legislature and the Governor’s office were controlled by the “too extreme” crowd, as they are in Wisconsin and many other states, these bills would pass into law in the blink of an eye.

As I said in my opening remarks on page one of the Ski Country Educator - if there were ever a time for you to get involved in defending public employee rights - this it!

Dennis Carlson, Director – Ski Country UniServ

Amazing Ski Country Members

Rob Bell, a teacher at Dillon Valley Elementary in Dillon Colorado and a member of the **Summit County Education Association**, was presented with the Association Past Presidents' Memorial Award for outstanding reading teacher given by the Colorado Council International Reading Association.

Michele Conroy of the **Moffat County Education Association** will be awarded the CEA Award at the upcoming CEA Delegate Assembly in April. Michele represents Ski Country on the CEA Board of Directors and will be leaving that position after the upcoming delegate assembly. The CEA Award recognizes an Association member who has given outstanding service to education at the state level. This is the highest award that CEA can give to a member.

Thanks to the efforts of **Megan Talbott**, president of the **Roaring Fork Community Education Association**, Basalt Elementary won \$500 for reaching one of the highest percentages in the state for the first week of the recent TELL survey. Every school in the Roaring Fork School District reached the goal of at least 50% participation.

Ski Country did very well in the recent TELL survey. All of our locals participated and we had five locals that were over the 50% mark. The state total was 46.76% which far exceeded last year's percentage.

Aspen lead the way with 100% participation. Aspen was one of only four school districts in Colorado that made 100%. The districts in Ski Country that exceeded the 50% mark are listed below:

Aspen – 100%
Moffat County – 83.33%
North Park School District – Jackson County – 75%
Roaring Fork – 68.92%
Summit County – 57.14%

Congratulations and thank you to all of our local leaders and association representatives, who pushed, prodded and cajoled. **You are awesome!**

The individual schools that had over 50% participation will have access to their results. The following is a statement from one of our leaders in a school where the results of the TELL survey from last year were taken to heart.

“Our principal started listening to us! I guess the correct way to say that would be she started to realize the importance of a team approach to solving problems in the school. Teachers are now more valued as decision-makers, and we are more invested in the changes we have made. We view more than just her as leaders too. She also started to take things less personally. We have all realized that we're in this together, and it has made for a better place to work and learn.”

Professional Association vs. Union

In a recent NEA poll members were asked if they would rather be seen as a Professional Association or as a Union. 81% of respondents said they would rather be seen as a Professional Association.

Mark Clark, President of the Summit County Education Association writes a regular newsletter to the members of the SCEA called the "Scoop". In a recent "Scoop" Mark reflects on whether we are a professional association or a union.

Reflection: Moving On

Are we a union or a professional association? Unions are generally viewed as employees acting together to achieve common goals related to salary, benefits, and working conditions. Professional associations are generally viewed as furthering a particular profession, the interest of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest. There is currently an internal conversation taking place at the state level (CEA) regarding messaging and the best way to support teachers and promote public education. The thinking of your local leadership team is that we are a professional association that works collaboratively with the Summit County community to "champion" quality education for our students, advocate for a fair salary and benefit package, and actively work to ensure that working conditions and priorities promote shared goals. So, are we a union? I would suggest it is time to be moving on, beyond the typical focus of unions. Are we a professional association? I would emphatically say YES!

Why does it matter? The typical focus of unions has been primarily "bean counting," making sure that the "beans" (money, time, work load) are equitably distributed internally and in relation to comparable occupations. While these are critical tasks, if our focus stops there we have relegated our daily efforts to nothing more than a job; and a professional is concerned about more than "beans." A professional is concerned about being part of something larger, something of value. A professional is concerned about the direction the profession is headed, the value to society, the ethical decisions that are being made, and yes, they still have to count "beans." To illustrate this point, I would call your attention to the United Auto Workers. While the union was negotiating "beans" (a necessary task), their "jobs" were becoming endangered because the US auto industry wasn't aligned with current and emerging needs. I would suggest that this "bean counting" focus is a primary reason many in the general public equate unions with a self-serving purpose whereas professional associations are more likely to be seen as promoting a public interest.

Where does that leave us? Fortunately our name, Summit County Education Association, says we are a professional association. Unfortunately, our past efforts have focused primarily on the "bean counting" part of our responsibilities. With significant changes on the horizon (SB 191 just to name one), it is time for us to formalize our collective thinking about where our profession should be headed and take action to make sure that we are doing the best job possible for our students, our community, and our families. And yes, we still have to count the "beans."

... Mark Clark, President – Summit County Education Association

Safe Social Media for Educators

Helpful hints from the Pennsylvania Education Association on the perils of Social Networking

More than 500 million people are Facebook members, with nearly 250,000 new members signing up each day. One in five people use Twitter or a similar service. At least one in every four Americans has a social media profile. Many association members and Colorado students use social media sites to keep in touch with classmates, family and friends.

The result? When you post photographs and personal information on one of these sites, you could be sharing them with millions of people around the world. For teachers and education professionals, an inappropriate page on one of these sites could lead to disciplinary action or dismissal.

When used appropriately, social media sites can be a valuable, powerful tool for professional development, sharing of resources, and social interaction. It's ok to use Twitter and Facebook to connect with friends, family and colleagues. NEA encourages members who choose to use social networking sites to be careful and thoughtful about the information you share, and with whom you share it. To help, we've provided a few simple tips to encourage social networking safety.

Think before you post

Each time you post a photograph or information on the web, make sure you would gladly show it to the following people:

- Your mother
- Your students
- Your superintendent
- The editor of The New York Times

Even though the First Amendment protects your speech as a private citizen on matters of public concern, that speech may fall outside of First Amendment protection if it “impedes your employer’s effectiveness or efficiency, or otherwise disrupts the workplace.”

Avoid posting anything on your profile page about your colleagues, administrators, or students, as well as using inappropriate or profane messages or graphics, or anything that would reflect negatively on your workplace. Be aware that social media applications, quizzes, games, and other related features also can result in content appearing on your profile page. Make sure that anything posted on your page is appropriate.

Know your “friends”

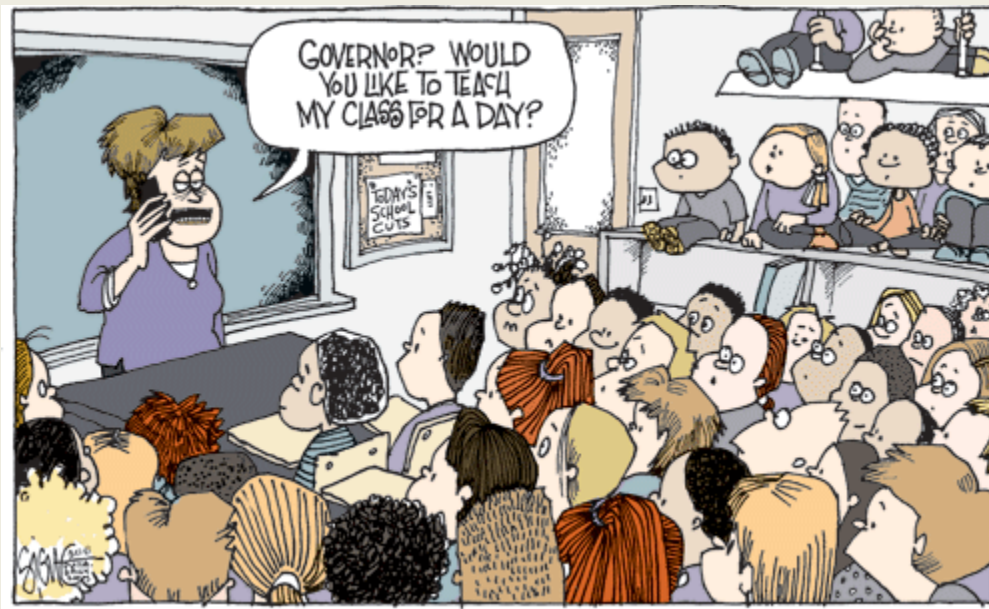
When accepting “friend requests” or adding individuals to your friend list, keep in mind that these individuals will have access to most information you post. Be sure not to accept a friend request from anyone you do not know. **Do not accept friend requests from your students or their parents.** If a student or parent of a student messages you through a social media site, do not respond.

Picture Perfection

Be sure not to post any photographs of yourself or others that could be considered unprofessional or inappropriate, or link to any material that could be considered unprofessional or profane. If a friend tags you in a photo or other content that could be considered unprofessional or profane, remove that tag and ask your friend to remove the content.

Protect your Privacy

Protecting the privacy of your information is an essential part of safe social media. Most social media sites have privacy settings to allow you to control who can see your profile. Make sure you are familiar with the privacy settings provided by the site that you’re using. Often, privacy settings are used to limit profile access to the individuals on your list of “friends.” Even if your information is “private,” make sure everything you post is professional and appropriate.



Join fellow CEA-NEA members in Denver or plan a WE ARE ONE Rally and Candlelight Vigil in your own community. Watch for more information at coloradoea.org.

Colorado Education Association

WE ARE ONE. WE ARE EVERYWHERE.

**Rally & Candlelight Vigil
City Park Bandshell in Denver
5:30 – 7:30 pm**

On April 4, 1968, 43 years ago in Memphis, a long struggle for human rights and human dignity ended in the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet this terrible tragedy brought economic justice and respect to the city's sanitation workers – justice and respect that all people deserve.

On April 4, labor unions, civil rights organizations, and religious leaders will stand together across our nation for the same human rights and human dignity for working men and women.

We will stand together with public workers across this country whose bargaining rights are under attack, with private workers who cannot get bargaining rights, and against the politicians and their allies who want to silence our political voice. **We will stand together** against massive state budget cuts that will harm our students and our schools.

On April 4 – on the job, in our schools, in our communities – we will stand together in solidarity.

Monday, April 4
Join Colorado Working Families
for music, solidarity, and hope!