

# NEA Priorities for the 110th Congress

## Summary of NEA Priority Areas

- **Influence Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.** Influence reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with a proactive agenda based on priorities outlined in NEA's [Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization](#).
- **Close Achievement Gaps.** Advance proven strategies such as reducing class sizes, ensuring high quality educators, and promoting parental involvement.
- **Maximize Education Funding.** Maximize overall federal funding of public education, particularly for ESEA/NCLB programs such as Title I and teacher quality, IDEA, Pell Grants, E-Rate, rural education and other critical programs.
- **Reduce Dropout Rates/Increase Graduation Rates.** Invest \$10 billion over the next 10 years to support dropout prevention programs and states who make high school graduation compulsory, starting with an appropriation of \$1 billion in Fiscal Year 2008.
- **Repeal Social Security Offsets.** Repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).
- **Strengthen Higher Education.** Strengthen teacher preparation programs, support quality innovations including distance learning, and increase access including by strengthening student aid in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.
- **Expand Educator Tax Relief.** Encourage respect for educators by using the tax code to recognize educator sacrifice and provide additional resources for schools.
- **Reduce Cost of and Improve Access to Health Care.** Address the high cost of health care and prescription drugs; promote access by NEA members, children, and the public to affordable health insurance plans.
- **Increase Minimum Wage.** Increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour.



## NEA Victories in the 109th Congress

Despite a highly partisan Congress and the general anti-public education slant of many members of Congress, NEA secured a number of victories for public education during the 109th Congress. These victories were achieved using a comprehensive strategy targeted at retaining support of Democrats while working with moderate Republicans, as well as conservative Republicans with an interest in a particular issue, to either pass or block legislation.

- **Educator Tax Deduction** - NEA secured a two-year extension of the \$250 above-the-line deduction for educators' out-of-pocket classroom supply expenses.
- **QZABs** - NEA secured a two-year extension of the Qualified Zone Academy Bond program, which helps renovate and modernize school facilities.
- **Vouchers** - NEA successfully blocked an extension of the private school voucher program for students displaced by Hurricane Katrina. As a result, the voucher program ended in September 2006.
- **Estate Tax** - NEA and our allies waged an intensive grassroots and lobbying campaign that resulted in the defeat of a plan to repeal the estate tax permanently. Permanent repeal would cause states to lose billions of dollars that could be spent on education and other priorities.
- **Social Security Privatization** - Despite a major push by the Administration, Congress retreated on Social Security privatization, due to intense pressure from NEA and other groups that rallied significant grassroots opposition to privatization.
- **Career and Technical Education** - NEA blocked the President's plan to eliminate all funding for career and technical education. As a result, the House and Senate voted to reauthorize career and technical education with almost no opposition. The reauthorization bill also reflected a number of substantive NEA priorities.
- **Paraprofessional "Highly Qualified" Requirements** - NEA secured an extension of the deadline for paraprofessionals to meet NCLB's "highly qualified" requirements from January 8, 2006, to the end of the 2005-2006 school year.
- **"S" Endorsement for Bus Drivers** - NEA secured a one-year extension of the deadline for school bus drivers to receive the "S" endorsement on their drivers' licenses. The extension averted potential disruptions in school transportation and school closings as several state Departments of Motor Vehicles were not prepared to administer required tests to drivers.
- **E-Rate** - NEA secured two consecutive one-year extensions of an exemption from accounting rules that had stopped E-Rate funds from flowing. The exemption has allowed funds for Internet access to continue flowing uninterrupted to schools and libraries.
- **Education Technology** - NEA helped launch a campaign with major high-tech companies to save education technology funding for states. As a result, the program, which was slated for elimination by the Administration, survived for 2006.
- **High School Testing** - NEA blocked Administration proposals to mandate two additional years of testing in high schools under the No Child Left Behind Act.

- **GEAR-UP and TRIO** - NEA saved the GEAR-UP program and two TRIO initiatives, all of which were targeted for elimination by the Administration. GEAR-UP and TRIO provide valuable resources and assistance to encourage low-income students to apply to and remain in postsecondary education programs.

## 2006 Income Taxes

Association members can deduct the total of your unified dues (local-UniServ-CEA-NEA) as a miscellaneous itemized deduction on your federal income taxes, but not as a charitable contribution. Your dues are one sum for January-August 2006 plus a different sum for September-December 2006, because the calendar year overlaps two CEA membership years. Use your paycheck stub to determine the dues amounts for your 2006 taxes.

In December, before recessing for the holiday break, Congress extended the Teacher Tax Deduction for two more years. Teachers and para-educators can deduct up to \$250 for out-of-pocket classroom expenses as the "educator expense deduction" if you worked at least 900 hours in 2006. Your qualified expenses are subtracted when figuring your adjusted gross income.

For more information, see [irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=107557.00html](http://irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=107557.00html) This is 2005 information, but it applies to 2006.

## What's your Excuse?

The following are some classic written excuses given to teachers in  
The Albuquerque public school system:

"Dear School: Please excuse John from being absent on Jan. 28, 29,  
30, 31, 32, and also 33."

"Please excuse Dianne from being absent yesterday. She was in bed  
with gramps."

"Please excuse Johnnie for being. It was his father's fault."

"Chris will not be in school because he has an acre in his side."

"John has been absent because he had two teeth taken off his face."

"Excuse Gloria. She has been under the doctor."

"Lillie was absent from school yesterday because she had a going over."

"My son is under the doctor's care and should not take fizical ed. Please execute him."

"Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football. He was hit in the growing part."

"My daughter was absent yesterday because she was tired. She spent this weekend with the Marines."

"Please excuse Joyce from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday she fell off a tree and misplaced her hip."

"Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels."

"Maryann was absent Dec. 11-16, because she had a fever, sore throat, headache, and upset stomach. Her sister was also sick, fever and sore throat, her brother had a low-grade fever. There must be the flu going around, her father even got hot last night."

"Please excuse Blanche from jim today. She is administrating."

"George was absent yesterday because he had a stomach."

"Ralph was absent yesterday because he had a sore trout."

"Please excuse Sara for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot."

"Please excuse Lupe. She is having problems with her ovals."

"Please excuse Pedro from being absent yesterday. He had Diah (\*crossed out\*), diahoah (\*crossed out\*), dyah (\*crossed out\*), the craps."