

The Spearhead

A Newsletter for the Jefferson Federation of Teachers

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| Winter 2017 Volume 3, Number 2 |

**Now What?!**

David Shearouse, TJ VP

Now that the inauguration of ~~Comrade~~ President Donald Trump is complete, there are many questions and issues facing the future of our profession that are sure to impact both our school district and our union. Back in the fall, I used this space to write about why elections matter and why, regardless of your personal feelings regarding Hillary Clinton, she was best to represent our interests as teachers. Since she didn’t win on November 8, let’s talk about what the future may hold for teachers and teachers’ unions under the Trump Administration.

1. Friedrichs vs California Teacher’s Association: This case was argued before the Supreme Court just after the death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia. The case resulted in a 4-4 tie, allowing the California Teacher’s Association, and teachers’ unions nationwide, to continue to collect mandatory union dues and fees from all public-sector employees. Now, once Trump appoints an assuredly conservative justice to the court to replace Scalia, the case is sure to resurface, and teachers’ unions nationwide are almost certain to lose their ability to collect mandatory dues from members. As a result, teachers’ unions will have a reduced ability to advocate for their members and represent their interests.
2. National Right to Work Legislation: Presuming Friedrichs vs California Teacher’s Association does not reemerge in the Supreme Court, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and Senate will probably attempt to pass National Right to Work Legislation; such legislation, should it pass, would enable any person to opt out of paying union dues while still continuing to enjoy the benefits of being a part of said union. As a result of the reduced/eliminated financial resources, public and private unions will be at a greater disadvantage when negotiating with management, advocating for their members, or representing their interests in the political arena. The ultimate result will most likely be reduced earnings for union and non-union members alike, prompting some to call such legislation “National Right to Work *FOR LESS* Legislation.”
3. Vouchers: Considering the reputation of Trump’s Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, a nation-wide school-choice voucher program is almost certain to be introduced and implemented. Perhaps named “Make Education Great Again,” this legislation would offer $12,000 to every student in America who attends public school. This money would allow tax-payer dollars to be used in private and religious schools and would also most likely result in public school job cuts to offset reduced financial resources and enrollment in American public schools caused by the use of school-choice vouchers.

How will these items affect our school district and union? Only time will tell. However, if our union suffers the same defeat that teachers’ unions nationwide may through either a loss at the Supreme Court or the successful passage of National Right to Work Legislation, then we all will suffer. The district might face a potential $3.3 million impact from universal vouchers, 20-30 job cuts (regardless of seniority) may be necessary to offset such an expense, and the union, weakened by potential rulings of the Supreme Court/legislation, will be in less of a position to fight such actions. That’s why elections matter.

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**Winter News**

Eight Period Day at TJHS: Per Principal Chris Sefcheck, all discussions connected to the potential return to the Eight Period Day at TJHS have been tabled and will not be resumed until the new high school building is completed.

Health Care Buyout: If you receive the Healthcare Buyout per page 58 of the contract, please ensure that it has been administered to you appropriately. If you notice any problems in its distribution or administration, please see a JFT Officer or Building Representative.

Lesson Plans: Please ensure that weekly lesson plans are turned in using an appropriate format before the start of school every Monday for the following week. Failing to do is entirely negligent and whole indefensible from a union standpoint.

**Contract Knowledge**

Per the Contract, did you know:

Section 10, A, 1, C: Any employee may elect to withdraw from the hospitalization and major medical insurance benefit program provided for by this Agreement; and in lieu, thereof, receive a benefit, depending upon the level of benefit utilized prior to taking the buyout, as follows: Individual benefits: $150.00 per month; All other level of benefits: $325 per month. The amount shall be paid for each month that the employee does not participate in the aforesaid insurance program. This money will be placed into a tax-sheltered annuity of the employee’s choice (403b if possible).

Section 10, D: Life Insurance: Each employee shall be provided with group life insurance coverage in the following amount: $50,000. (This is in addition to the $5,000 provided by AFT through your union membership).

Upcoming Dates

Tuesday, April 25, 2017- Spring JFT TJ Building Meeting

Wednesday, May 10, 2017- General Membership Meeting at Middle School

Friday, June 2, 2017- Steak Fry

Recognitions

Weddings:

Daniele Mecchia- TJHS

Have a marriage or birth to celebrate? Tell us about it! E-mail: jjakubowski@wjhsd.net