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The Community Page

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Unions Try to Block Teachers from receiving \$38 Million in Bonuses!

"The teacher's unions are the clearest example of a group that has lost its way. Whenever anyone dares to offer a new idea, the unions protest the loudest."

—Mitt Romney, May 23, 2012

Why union bosses are against teachers receiving an extra \$38 million.

For decades, union bosses have convinced teachers that without the union, teachers will be mistreated, fired without cause and replaced at will by evil administrators. But teachers are learning that when it comes to fair treatment and pay, they receive a fair shake from parents, school districts and state legislators. When teachers discover this, union bosses fear it makes the union obsolete. Therefore, union bosses try to block all pay increases where the union was not involved in lobbying for the increase. Proposition 2 provides for over \$38 million to be paid this December to Idaho's best, most-effective teachers and to those teachers who go the extra mile. Union bosses fear that these pay increases give control to local school districts and make the union obsolete. Therefore, they are spending millions of dollars of the teachers' own union dues to defeat Proposition 2 and prevent teachers from receiving their bonuses.

\$38.8 million has been set aside by the state of Idaho to reward deserving Idaho teachers for their excellent performance during the 2011–2012 school year. These funds are in the bank ready to be paid. If Proposition 2 passes, over 80% of all Idaho teachers will receive an average bonus of \$2,000. If Proposition 2 fails, they will receive no bonus whatsoever. That seems unfair and harsh, yet blocking the bonuses is exactly the outcome that the union bosses are trying to create.

Students Come First.

In 2010, the Idaho legislature passed education reform laws called "Students Come First" that provide for substantial bonuses for top-performing teachers in addition to their regular pay, therefore allowing more-effective teachers who go the extra mile to be paid more than less-effective teachers. Fearing they were losing power, the union bosses argued against the bonuses. Union bosses threatened individual legislators that their careers would be over if they passed the education reform legislation. Superintendent Tom Luna's tires were slashed. Union bosses threatened those who testified in support of education reform. And in typical union fashion, they started indoctrinating teachers with misinformation. They told teachers that if the legislation passed, classroom sizes would explode, teachers would be replaced, measurements would be unfair and teacher salaries would be reduced. The legislation was in effect for the entire 2011–2012 school year and is still in effect in the 2012–2013 school year. Of course, none of the ominous predictions of the unions came to pass. But now there's over \$38 million ready to be paid out to deserving teachers. Union bosses object to teachers being paid money that the union doesn't control. And they object to school districts and parents having input on identifying and rewarding superior teachers. Fearing these bonuses will make the union obsolete, union bosses introduced Proposition 2 to try to block the bonuses from being paid. Therefore, the union bosses are resolved to block their own members from receiving the bonuses. It seems implausible that the unions would take that tack against their own membership. But that is exactly what is happening.

How did they go about trying to block their own teachers from receiving bonuses?

The union bosses craftily wrote Proposition 2 so that if it is voted down it will repeal the very law that allows the bonuses to be paid. Then they even solicited teachers' support to defeat Prop 2. But they failed to tell teachers that if Prop 2 is defeated it will cost teachers an average of \$2,000 per teacher per year. (If Proposition 2 passes, before December 15, 2012, 80% of all Idaho teachers will receive an average bonus of \$2,000. If Prop 2 does not pass, teachers will receive no bonus at all!) The unions are spending an enormous amount to defeat Prop 2 so their own teachers will not be paid the bonuses they have already earned!

No new taxes!

Under the direction of Governor Otter, Superintendent Tom Luna and the discerning guidance of the Idaho legislature, Propositions 1, 2 and 3 are all fully funded by the state without any increase in taxes and without any additional funds from local school districts! **This was done by cutting unnecessary and wasteful expenditures in other areas.** Contrary to union scaremongering, no teachers' jobs were cut and no teacher salaries were cut by the new laws.

With all the union money flowing into the pockets of the union bosses, you would think they would not complain if the teachers made a little more money. **Over 80% of all Idaho teachers have already qualified to receive an average of over \$2,000 each!** But the union bosses are working feverishly to prevent the teachers from receiving their bonuses. And unbelievably, they are actually using union dues collected from the teachers to do it!



The unions are asking teachers to speak out against their own pay increase! Unfortunately, most teachers don't understand that's actually what they're doing when they ask people to vote "no" on Proposition 2.

Union facts: it's all about the money!

The National Education Association represents most of the nation's teachers. In 2008, the NEA reported that its president, Reg Weaver, was paid more than \$686,949. (That's more money than the average American teacher earns in 10 years!) Current president Dennis Van Roekel receives approximately \$400,000 in salary and benefits. In addition, there are hundreds of bosses at state chapter levels that receive enormous salaries. In fact, the NEA has 31 officers and employees in its national headquarters alone who earn over \$200,000! Union bosses in Idaho pay themselves more than \$130,000 per year.

The American Federation of Teachers is the smaller of the two teacher unions and also represents school support staff, higher education faculty and staff, health care professionals, and state and municipal employees. At AFT's headquarters in Washington, nine officers and employees earn more than \$200,000 a year. Randi Weingarten, who was elected president in 2008, received \$428,284 in salary and benefits. Of the millions of dollars donated to political candidates in the past two years, the union gave all but \$10,000 to Democrats.

Vote yes on propositions 1, 2, and 3.

Proposition 1 - Makes it easier for local school boards to correct or weed out ineffective teachers and reward good teachers.

Proposition 2 - Provides bonuses for our most-effective teachers and makes it possible to pay effective teachers who go the extra mile more than less-effective teachers.

Proposition 3 - Provides 21st century technology in Idaho's schools so that all Idaho school districts can keep up with the rest of the nation. This new technology will be provided without increasing taxes. This technology pays for itself by replacing other expenses like textbooks and calculators. No teachers will lose their jobs. No salaries will be reduced.

A message to Idaho teachers.

We love you! Thank you for your countless hours of hard work, patience and diligence in teaching our children. Next to parents, you have the greatest impact on the future of our children as they grow in stature and understanding. We want the best for you and for our children. We hope you will set aside the interests of the union bosses and do what is best for you and for the children. Please support education reform in Idaho. None of the ominous things that the union has told you will come to pass. No teachers will be replaced by computers. Classroom sizes will not get out of hand. Your salaries will not be decreased in order to pay bonuses. These reforms are well thought out with both teachers and students in mind. Teachers have nothing to lose and so much to gain.



This ad was paid for by Melaleuca. A logical question would be why Melaleuca (or any other company) would be interested in education reform. The answer is simple. Melaleuca hires over 500 new Idaho employees every year. At any one time, Melaleuca has dozens of unfilled, high-paying positions because there are not enough qualified people to fill them. Better education would make a world of difference to Melaleuca and to the young people we hire.