

# NEA is working to provide great public schools Directors' Newsletter

October 2021

## Joy, Justice & Excellence



NEA President Becky Pringle and U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona talk to educators from Delran Township School District in New Jersey about wins for students that happen through collaboration, in her *Joy, Justice and Excellence* tour.

## NEA Continues 2022-24 Budgetary Process

The NEA operates on a two-year budgetary cycle and its 2022-24 process is well underway. During October SuperWeek, NEA Directors dedicated significant time to reviewing, discussing, and ultimately voting to endorse a proposal to modify the Strategic Plan and Budget Framework. The Board of Directors began by hearing more about the collaborative process by which stakeholders were heard and engaged to determine the plan's strengths and challenges. Stakeholder groups included NCSEA, NCUEA, state presidents, and state executive directors. The process continued with membership engagement via the Board of Directors, Aspiring Educators, EMAC, Higher Education, and NEA-Retired. The NEA's budget must ultimately apply resources intelligently, by implementing stakeholder and constituent voices.

As a vital step, the NEA's Strategic Plan and Budget Framework builds upon core values (identity), mission (why), and vision (what). Then, ultimately, the framework will drive NEA's organizational tactics and activities.

The Board used small group sessions to consider and respond to the framework together. The breakouts carefully mulled specific Strategic Objectives:

- Build Safe, Healthy, Inclusive, and Future-Focused Learning Environments
- Support Professional Excellence and Respect.
- Advance Racial Justice and Social Justice.

- Strengthen Public Education as the Cornerstone of Democracy
- Enhance Professional and Organizational Regard.

The NEA is undertaking this work at a point of reflection from the 2020-22 cycle and anticipation of the 2022-24 cycle. The proposed Framework supported by NEA's Board of Directors recognized a strategic goal to "achieve our mission and to grow and to strengthen our association," which will in turn "promote quality public education for students, educators, and America's school."

The proposed 2022-24 Strategic Framework, describes a cyclical process where capacity leads to opportunity and opportunity leads to capacity. Social justice is a focus throughout the plan, advancing opportunities that "transform public education into a just, equitable, and excellent system". Social justice also feeds and is fed by strengthening our organizational capacity "across the enterprise." The framework envisions a cycle of success, which places "students, educators, public schools and communities" at the center of it all.

Working together with all stakeholders and constituent groups, the NEA will continue its budgetary planning for the 2022-24 cycle in the months ahead. Through a careful budgetary process, the NEA strives for what NEA President Becky Pringle terms our, "shared responsibility to ensure all students, all educators, all schools are excelling, and everyone knows it."



## Program and Budget Committee Election

The NEA Program and Budget Committee held elections for four open seats. The committee is charged with carefully examining the existing plans, ongoing work, and progress to date for the adopted Strategic Objectives each year. Together with the Board of Directors, they propose any modification of the Strategic Plan and Budget to the NEA RA for approval. The committee looks for ways to expand opportunities for professional excellence, grow commitments to social and racial justice, strengthen educators' voice, and deepen relationships with early career educators. The Strategic Plan and Budget also supports members, students, affiliates, and communities in overcoming injustices marked by inequitable conditions and disparate impacts that have been exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Three incumbents were re-elected in the first round of voting, including James Frazier (NJ), Gina Harris (IL), and Shannon McCann (WA). In a run-off election, Director Dana Livermont (SD) was elected to her first term on the committee. The newly elected Directors will join Director Brenda Robinson (AR), Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria, Vice President Princess Moss, and a state president representing the National Council of State Education Associations.

The newly elected members will join current committee members, James Harris (NJ), Gina Harris (IL), Shannon McCann (WA), state president Denise Specht (MN), Vice President, Princess Moss, and Secretary-Treasurer, Noel Candelaria.



Frazier



Harris



McCann



Livermont

sessions to contribute to the principles NEA organize around assessments in the future. The committee has asked experts how NEA can lean into this work on reforming assessments to be more inclusive and equitable, encouraging support for educator input in creating, implementing, and evaluating assessment systems and ensuring assessment literacy. The committee is still working on compiling assessment recommendations for needed flexibilities under federal law. Supporting increased use of a diverse array of assessments by educators at various levels – from classrooms to districts and beyond. Finally, the committee is working on strategic planning with staff to change the hearts and minds of stakeholders and establish consensus on what and how we assess students.

Moss completed her report with an update about her visit to the White House for a Labor Day event in September and her work on the K-12 Climate Action Plan.



Moss and President Biden celebrate collaboration

## Report of the PAC Council

Elections have direct consequences for NEA members, students, and their families. That is the message that the Board Representatives to the NEA PAC Council, Mary Bowers (VT) and Kevin Deely (PA), delivered during their PAC Council report. Largely because of the efforts undertaken by NEA Members during the 2020 election cycle, President Biden was elected. Since his election, and because of the continued advocacy of NEA Members, schools have received the largest increase of funding in a generation.

The Fund continues to need additional member contributions as future elections will determine the level of support educators receive from the federal government. Due to the remote nature of the 2021 Representative Assembly, the Fund did not receive its normal level of replenishment. Kevin Deely (PA) suggested that members be encouraged to donate as little as one dollar each month through the [education-votes.nea.org](https://www.nea.org/votes) website. He argued that if ten percent of our members donate \$12 annually, the fund will have enough to provide meaningful support for every pro-public education candidate.

## Vice President's Report

NEA Vice President Princess Moss announced the NEA committees and think tanks have been finalized and thanked Directors for their patience as the NEA Executive Committee completed the work. Committee Chairs will meet on October 12, and Think-Tank Co-Facilitators will meet on October 14. Committees and Think Tanks are scheduled to start meeting the week of October 18.

NEA Think Tanks:

- Reimagining the Future of Public Education
- Enterprise-wide Vision for Leadership Development Systems
- Safe and Just Schools
- The Future of Organizing

NEA Committees:

- Board Leadership Development Workgroup
- Education Support Professional (ESP) Careers Committee
- Human and Civil Rights Awards Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Local President Release Time Grant Committee
- Professional Standards and Practice Committee

Moss shared her desire for the meetings and NEA National Conferences to take place in-person this year, but keeping everyone safe is the top priority. Therefore, NEA is looking for spaces large enough to host participants while allowing for social distancing. Information about the location and COVID precautions required to attend national conferences will be shared when it is available.

Moss and Executive Committee member Hanna Vaandering are co-chairing the NEA Task Force on the Future of Assessment. Since the last meeting, the committee outlined its vision by integrating feedback from the RA presentation and conducting a new round of listening

## 2021 RA Summary Snapshot

- ▶ NBIs – 65 submitted; 23 adopted; 22 referred
- ▶ Legislative Amendments – 15 submitted; 11 adopted
- ▶ Resolutions Amendments – 5 submitted; 4 adopted
- ▶ Constitutional Amendments – 2 submitted and adopted
- ▶ Bylaw Amendments – 1 submitted and adopted
- ▶ Elected 2 EC members; 3 ESP At-Large; 1 ESP Alternate At-Large



# “My Story” by Montserrat Garibay



**Montserrat Garibay, Senior Liaison of Labor Relations in the Biden Administration's Department of Education.**

Christine Trujillo, chair of the NEA Hispanic Caucus introduced the 2021 NEA Hispanic observance, presented by Montserrat Garibay, Senior Liaison of Labor Relations in the Biden Administration's Department of Education. Before her appointment, Montserrat served as Texas Secretary-Treasurer in the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO). She also served as Vice President for Certified Employees in her union, Education Austin, a merged local of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO. She worked as a bilingual prekindergarten teacher for eight

walked and phone banked for school board members and state representatives, and it gave her a voice and taught her the importance of civic participation.

“When I became the Vice President of Education Austin for Certified Employees, we had a vision for our union. We started working towards social justice unionism and, yes, focusing on the bread-and-butter issues, but also integrating the importance of social justice and professional development for classified employees and certified employees. ... I attended an NEA conference in New Mexico, and that's where I met Rocio Inclán and all the amazing people that helped me see unionism differently. We applied for a grant to integrate immigration into the work. We started doing DACA clinics when DACA was passed by President Obama in 2018.”

She helped to organize citizenship clinics that helped many education workers and others become U.S. citizens.

“... I never thought that I would be working at this level in the federal government, and it's been a transformative change in my life. But I know I wouldn't be here if I hadn't found my place within the labor movement. Secretary Cardona, embraces the values that we need to keep organizing. .... We need to keep organizing because the only way that we can make the changes that need to happen. You need to be at the table, demanding and holding everyone accountable. Now as a Senior Advisor for Labor Relations, I'm able to work with the different unions and to share your work with the Secretary. We need to invest in teachers. We need to grow a diverse teacher pipeline. We need to work closely with the teaching profession through the recovery and into the future. I think it's really important for each of you leaders to challenge yourself to mentor others so they can come along, so you can share your knowledge.

I was the first Latina Secretary-Treasurer for the Texas AFL-CIO and maybe, yes, I'm the first Latina immigrant Senior Advisor for Labor Relations to the Secretary of Education. Bringing more people along is extremely important and it's something that we all need to challenge ourselves to do.

The work that you are doing as educators, as custodians, classified employees, paraprofessionals is extremely important. You are the backbone of our public schools. ... This is the time for us to reimagine what public education can be.

Never in my wildest dreams 30 years ago would I ever think I would be working for our President. I know that I am here because I found my voice with the labor movement.”



years and earned her National Board Certification.

Montserrat told her story of coming to the United States from Mexico as an undocumented immigrant and becoming a citizen 20 years later.

“My mother, my sister, and I came to the U.S. in Austin, Texas, after my mother and my father got divorced. Like any courageous Latina mother, she decided that we were going to move to the U.S. to start a new life. I didn't speak a word of English. I was scared.”



**Garibay, an immigrant student inspired by her teacher.**

Montserrat started in an ESL classroom along with students from many countries around the world. It was as scary because “...My mother always told us that we were undocumented and that we had to have a plan in case she was not able to pick us up from school. I had an amazing teacher, Mrs. Hernandez. She was my guardian angel, just like many of you are guardian angels for your students. She is the reason my sister and I learned English within a year, and we were moved to all English classes where we started this journey of becoming critical thinkers and becoming outspoken, and to love learning. She was my inspiration to be a teacher....”

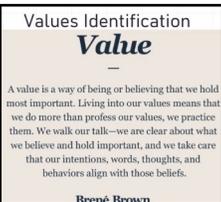
Her mom's boss helped Montserrat become an international student. She was able to graduate from the University of Texas ready to start teaching.

Montserrat's mentor teacher advised her to become part of Education Austin. She became an organizer and through her work, they were able to get the superintendent and the school board members to pay for the other half of the Pre-K program after the legislature cut it to half day. She continued to organize, using the training from Education Austin, collaboration with other organizations, state leaders, and networking with teachers across the U.S.

She became a U.S. citizen and an education activist. She block-

## Leading with Values

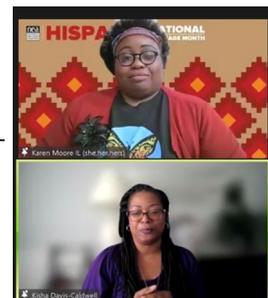
Why be involved in the NEA? Knowing the answer to this question helps focus decision-making and strengthen the message each leader shares with others. NEA staff member, Corey Wofford used *Michael Jr.'s Break Time Know your Why* video to show the difference between just doing something and doing something with purpose.



between just doing something and doing something with purpose. NEA staff member Kisha Davis-Caldwell and NEA Director Karen Moore (IL) facilitated an activity titled “Values Identifi-

fication”. Opening with a definition of “value” by Brené Brown, Davis-Caldwell and Moore called on Directors and observers to identify two personal values that drive their work. Directors then used those values to form a personal why statement that would answer the question, “Why do you do this work?” in the format of “To \_\_\_\_\_ so that \_\_\_\_\_”. Participants then met in Zoom breakout rooms to discuss how their identified values drive their decision-making. Once Directors and observers were brought back together to debrief, several shared with the group. Later in the meeting, President Becky Pringle shared her values: compassion and Ujima, a Nguzo

Saba word for collective work and responsibility. Davis-Caldwell and Moore closed the activity with a reminder that “so much of the work we have to do is about how we do the work.” They urged the Board to remember, “To thine own self, be true. We are making decisions for the masses that also matter for ourselves.”



**Moore and Davis-Caldwell called on the Board to “find their why”**



# Teaching Truth: American Indian/ Alaskan Native Observance

Chair of the NEA American Indian/Alaska Native Caucus, Tracy Hartman-Bradley (NE), introduced Professor Margaret Ellen Newell from Ohio State University for the NEA Board American Indian/Alaskan Native Observance.

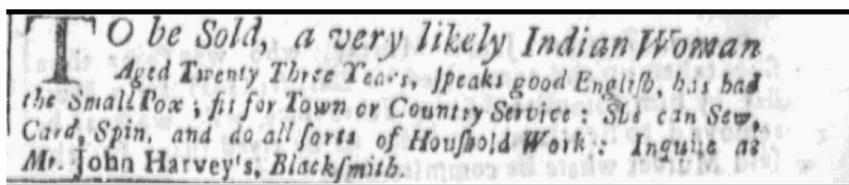
Professor Newell centered her presentation on the story of a young refugee girl from King Philip's war. Most likely a Pequot Indian, "Betty" was separated from her family and sold at auction in Connecticut to Peter Bradley and wife Mary. Mary later remarried Thomas Young and relocated to Long Island where Young lived. "Betty" became Young's property although indigenous refugees were not legally slaves for life. She had a son named Caesar with an enslaved African, and Caesar was claimed as property as well.

Until 1720, more Native Americans were exported out of New England than enslaved Africans were imported into the area in a sort of "reverse Middle Passage." Professor Newell shared primary sources, such as a list of native women, men, children--and even babies--sold as property.

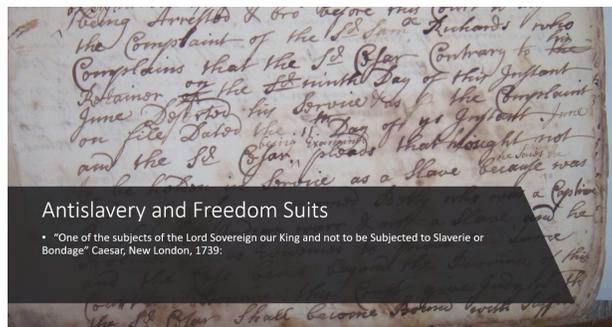


Hartman-Bradley wore orange like many others on the Board to acknowledge murdered and missing indigenous women and generations of children lost to residential schools. She also challenged participants of the meeting to share what they learned during the observance.

*Boston News-Letter, Nov. 13, 1732*



Indigenous enslaved people were dehumanized, as this notice in the Boston News-Letter on November 13, 1732, illustrates. This woman--like "Betty"--was stolen from her family and ripped from her culture, only to be valued for her "marketable" skills like speaking English and sewing.



Even though most indigenous enslaved people were not legally enslaved for life, Caesar, the son of "Betty," was claimed as property by a blacksmith named Samuel Richards. Caesar ran away in 1739 and claimed his freedom based on his mother's wrongful enslavement. Richards fought to keep Caesar as his property, but ultimately, a jury in New London freed Caesar. Later, Caesar changed his name to "Freeman," filed a lawsuit demanding reparations and won.

Professor Newell closed the story of "Betty" with a question: "What does a society look like in which the rights and humanity of all people are recognized?" She then shared that even as a professional historian, she did not know about it. This is the power of teaching truth.

To learn more from Professor Newell, see her in this 12-minute documentary titled [The Forgotten Slavery of Our Ancestor](#).

## Secretary-Treasurer's Report

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria spoke about the fiscal health of the NEA and highlighted the obligation NEA governance and staff have to be good stewards of members' dues dollars. The NEA has robust fiscal guidelines that protect the organization against any audit, regardless of who might sit in the White House.

Candelaria explained that Covid-19 has caused membership to decline in every category except NEA Retired. The union has lost tens of thousands of members over the last two years due to the pandemic, and the impact of that loss is felt in virtually every school district across the nation. He also noted a significant shortage of substitute teachers as a national trend. It is expected that membership loss will continue for the near term. Membership growth is a primary goal for the organization, and through efforts in NEA's Member Organizer Program, it is expected that significant membership growth is on the horizon. The Member Organizer Program trains member leaders to engage potential members and encourage them to join the association.

Candelaria also discussed leading the Strategic Plan and Budget Committee. The NEA Budget works on a two-year, year-round cycle. The budget is structured

in a way that directly reflects the organizational values of the Association and is currently in the middle of the current two-year budget cycle. During this period the NEA Budget Committee is listening to feedback from stakeholders to identify challenges and understand strengths so that the budget is as strong as it can be.

### PROPOSED 2022-2024 Strategic Framework

"Shared responsibility to ensure all students, all educators, all schools are excelling, and everyone knows it."

#### Strategic Goals

To achieve our mission and to grow and strengthen our association to promote quality public education for students, educators, and America's schools, we the NEA will:

1. Enhance the well-being of America's students, their families, and their communities by **advancing opportunities** that will transform public education into a just, equitable, and excellent system.
2. Ensure the success of the public education system, our members, and those they serve by developing the structures, processes, and practices that **strengthen our organizational capacity** across the enterprise.



# Report of General Counsel Alice O'Brien



**NEA General Counsel  
Alice O'Brien**

A \$125 million school voucher program was struck down by a Kentucky trial court on Friday, Oct. 9. NEA and KEA challenged the program under several provisions of the Kentucky State Constitution including a provision prohibiting special or discriminatory laws and a unique provision in Kentucky requiring a voter referendum before any money raised or collected for education in the state can be diverted from public schools.

More states are proposing voucher legislation in the upcoming legislative session spurred by a recent ruling about school choice heard by the Supreme Court. Carson (Maine) asked the court to rule that when a state decided to provide funding for private school tuition, the state must also fund private

religious schools. Currently, the Supreme Court has a 6-3 conservative majority.

The Court also scheduled a hearing this year for a Mississippi case asking the court to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, the precedent establishing women's reproductive rights. Additionally, the court will hear a case involving states' rights to enact commonsense gun control measures, and potentially a case involving affirmative action. The court decides what cases they will hear, and most agree that they are setting up the groundwork to overturn rulings on many issues that have angered conservatives over the past several decades.

At the lower court level, the Biden administration has been effective at getting new judges confirmed by the U.S. Senate. 13 of Biden's nominees to the Court of Appeals have been confirmed so far

givenness Program kicks in after someone works for a qualifying employer and makes ten years of payments into the right payment plan. O'Brien urged NEA leaders to inform members about this wonderful change. There are hundreds of thousands of members who could benefit substantially from this program.

O'Brien informed the Board that NEA continues to push OSHA to provide COVID-19 policies at the federal level to protect educators. In June, NEA secured protections for school health workers and health clinic employees in higher education. Biden directed OSHA to require vaccines for all workplaces with 100 or more employees. The requirement for vaccines or a testing regime applies to public schools in

The screenshot shows the NEA website with a header "NEA: working to keep educators and students safe". Below the header, there are two main sections. On the left, there is a section titled "Honesty in Education" with a sub-header "FREEDOM TO TEACH THE TRUTH" and a quote: "No matter our color, background, or zip code, we want our kids to have an education that imparts honesty about who we are, integrity in how we treat others, and courage to do what's right." Below this is a "NEWS" section with a headline: "Teacher Asking for Students Preferred Pronouns Claims State Senator 'Doxxed' Him". On the right, there is a section titled "U.S. Department of Education" with a sub-header "Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Opens Investigations in Five States Regarding Prohibitions of Universal Indoor Masking". Below this is a video player showing a news segment titled "The Last Word With Lawrence O'Donnell" with a subtitle "THREATS & VIOLENCE AGAINST SCHOOL BOARDS RISE SHARPLY".

28 states covered by OSHA.

In Arizona, problematic education bills were passed in June. The bills put teachers in jeopardy if they teach truthful history in their classrooms and also prohibit school district mask requirements and vaccine requirements in universities. The AEA, NEA, and the AZ School Board Association were successful in voiding all the laws on the ground that they were passed in an impermissible manner since they were passed through budget reconciliation. The case has now gone to the Arizona Supreme Court.

O'Brien ended by discussing litigation trying to enforce mask requirements in schools on behalf of students with disabilities whose health is jeopardized in maskless classrooms. There are many similar challenges in many states. The Biden administration's office of Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Education has opened investigations into seven states that still prohibit masks in schools. Both organizations are open to hearing complaints from other school districts with mask mandates being implemented in a way that violates students' rights to access education.

The image shows a large banner that reads "CANCEL STUDENT DEBT" held up in front of the White House. Below the banner, there is text: "U.S. Department of Education Announces Transformational Changes to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program" and the URL "NEA.org/studentdebt".

and twenty-eight have made it on to district courts. In his nominations, Biden has prioritized demographic and professional diversity. He has even nominated a union labor lawyer, which hasn't happened in three decades. Jennifer Sung who was nominated for the ninth Circuit Court of appeals previously represented NEA and the Oregon Education Association.

General Counsel O'Brien had other positive news. The U.S. Department of Education answered NEA's call for public service loan forgiveness. Over the coming weeks, 49,000 people who have public service loans will have a \$3.9 billion in debt automatically discharged. That is an average of \$80,000 per person. Over 550,000 more people will be given up to two years of credit. The Public Service Loan For-

The graphic features a classroom scene with students and a teacher. The text reads "For Every Student JOY, JUSTICE, AND EXCELLENCE". Below the scene is a quote: "No matter the school I visited or the Zoom meeting I joined, whenever two or more educators were gathered there was light." attributed to Becky Pringle, NEA President.



# Building NEA Organizational Capacity

## Executive Director Report

NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson began her report by acknowledging the collective exhaustion of the membership in light of the pandemic, a polarized citizenry, educators forced to change teaching modality at the drop of a hat, and hostile groups threatening school boards, administrators, and teachers for their handling of pandemic education and racial justice issues. She continued, “We have pushed through tragedy, but landed on a number of triumphant moments...”, and recalled critical accomplishments: the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the election of 123 NEA members to public office, the passage of the American Rescue Plan, and various other pieces of legislation.

Anderson then highlighted some of the work that NEA is engaged in – such as community schools. Community schools advance both NEA’s vision, as well as President Pringle’s priority goals, and help achieve systemic changes for students, educators, and communities. Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement (CAPE) grants are being used in various communities to build EdJustice coalitions, which in turn advance the Safe and Just Schools campaign. Finally, NEA’s Organizing and Bargaining for the Common Good Campaigns are working in various districts nationwide to help build support for the community school model.



To sustain the types of changes NEA is advocating, staff and leaders are working to build support, beginning with partnerships. Anderson highlighted one such effort with NJEA on a labor/ management collaboration institute. This has the potential to bring systemic change by hosting affiliates from across the country to improve professional development and increase racial and social justice training.

Anderson then discussed how NEA will secure the environment. At all levels, elections matter: “They matter at the federal level. They matter at the state level. They matter at the local level. We have to elect champions. First of all, we have to elect our own.” Anderson reiterated that organized labor is an institution that allows workers to practice democracy in their workplace. To that end, she explained that President Pringle met with Secretary of Labor Walsh to discuss how increasing union representation shores up the norm and belief in representative democracy. To help deal with the manipulation of information, NEA sent a letter to social media platforms,



Executive Director Kim Anderson celebrates NEA work in community schools.

“challenging Facebook and Instagram and TikTok and other platforms to address profit-driven motive spreading disinformation through their algorithms...”

She closed by reminding the board that while our enemies are using issues to drive a wedge between us, we will unite, organize and advocate. We will exemplify what it means to be professionals, pursue justice for all our students, and fight to preserve our democracy.

## NEA Advocates for All Members’ Union Rights

During October’s SuperWeek, NEA Directors met with NEA Government Relations and lobbied Congress to reintroduce (and ultimately pass) the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate to Act (PSFNA). At present, no federal law protects public workers’ rights to organize or bargain for better wages and employment conditions. Workers do not have federal protection for voluntary payroll deduction of union dues or engagement in concerted activities related to mutual aid. There are also no federal protections to access mediation, fact-finding, and arbitration during dispute resolution.

Consequently, NEA members rely upon a patchwork of state laws that may be easily assailed

by anti-worker and anti-public education forces. While some states recognize and protect these rights, others do not. Also, legislative efforts and debates in several state legislatures have shown how state-level protections may be threatened or rescinded.

Public employees, in NEA’s view, deserve a federally protected right to come together in freely chosen unions. Directors recognized that nearly 20 million people worked in state and local governments—including social workers, nurses, EMS personnel, custodians, and healthcare workers, in addition to educators. Many of these professionals in non-educational settings and capacities are dues-paying full NEA members in good standing who look to NEA to represent their interests.

In supporting the PSFNA, the NEA signals a strong commitment to public sector worker rights to all of its members and partners in the labor movement.

## Thank You

Thank you to the NEA Board Directors who worked so hard to put together this newsletter

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If you would like to join the team for our next meeting, please contact Brian Kerekes.

