

Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.

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Nevada Teacher Union Bosses' Attempt To Muzzle a Student Newspaper Backfires

Were it not for National Education Association (NEA) teacher union chiefs' ingrained habit of trying to "resolve" disagreements by putting a gag on anyone who challenges their power and prerogatives, the so-called "Choirgate" matter at Churchill County High School (CCHS) in northern Nevada could very likely have blown over within a few days without anyone outside local teachers, parents, students, and school administrators ever hearing about it.

However, as a consequence of the blunderbuss tactics of top bosses of the NEA union affiliate in Churchill County, people all across Nevada and even in other states have been reading about "Choirgate."

Last month, the bosses of the Churchill County Education Association (CCEA) union, which is part of the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) union as well as the NEA, went ballistic after learning that the newspaper editor at CCHS was talking to a group of parents who questioned the audition process for Nevada's Honor Choir.

In the story, Editor-in-Chief Lauren MacLean wrote about how CCHS choir director Kathy Archey had apparently screened out the audition tapes of several of the school's applicants for Honor Choir and never submitted them to the Nevada Music Educators Association (NMEA), while leaving students and parents with the impression she had submitted all the tapes.

Evidently concluding that the students whose tapes were never forwarded had been treated unfairly, the NMEA broke with its normal practices on January 8 and 14 by allowing six CCHS students the opportunity to audition privately with NMEA representatives for Honor Choir.

Before writing her story, Ms. MacLean, a 17-year-old senior, sought the perspective of the CCEA union hierarchy, who under Silver State law wield monopoly power to bargain with school officials over the pay, benefits, and working conditions of all the school district's teachers, naturally including Ms. Archey.

But CCEA union bosses weren't interested in giving their perspective. And they instructed Ms. Archey not to give hers, either. Instead, they promptly filed a grievance with CCHS President Kevin Lords and school district Superintendent Carolyn Ross, demanding that they quash publication of Ms. MacLean's article about "Choirgate."

Making a logical leap that is surely wild, but not atypical of teacher union bosses nationwide, the CCEA grievance insisted that a student newspaper article written by a high school senior based on what she had heard from dismayed parents and learned from her own research constitutes a "personnel matter" that must remain "confidential"!

Both Mr. Lords and Ms. Ross had the good sense to dismiss such a claim and refused to block publication of Ms. MacLean's article, which ran in *The Flash*, CCHS's student newspaper, on January 29. "This is not a teacher evaluation, this is a student article," noted Ms. Ross dryly. "Our policy has nothing to do with what a student is writing."

The CCEA union bosses' attempt to censor a student newspaper article whose accuracy they never publicly questioned, just because they didn't like what it said, was considered shocking enough to be covered on the AP wire and by *USA Today* as well as the Silver State press.

But no one should really be shocked. Teacher union bosses across the country habitually wield their government-granted monopoly-bargaining privileges to suppress "inconvenient" speech.

Just a few years ago, for example, top officials of the NEA's statewide affiliate in Kansas went all the way to the state Supreme Court to prevent public schools from allowing the leaders of nonunion, professional teacher groups to use school districts' taxpayer-funded internal mail systems for communicating with other teachers.

In this case (*Johnson County v. KANAEE and ONEA*), union lawyers prevailed. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled that, even though bosses of NEA-affiliated unions have unlimited access to distribute pro-forced unionism propaganda through school districts' internal mail systems, public schools may bar the distribution of materials by the "wrong" teacher groups.

In Nevada, Kansas and nationwide, the freedom of speech of independent-minded teachers as well as of students and parents needs to be safeguarded from power-crazed teacher union officials.

And by far the best way to accomplish this object is to repeal state laws, like those currently on the books in Nevada, Kansas, and more than 30 other states, that empower teacher union bosses to act as the "exclusive" (monopoly) bargaining agents of all the teachers in a district, including those who choose not to join.

Once they are stripped of their monopoly-bargaining privileges, teacher union officials will have no choice but to begin treating teachers, school officials, parents and students with more respect, or risk losing member after member.

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