

## Are You Experiencing Renewed Union Membership Drives?

As you return to school, you may find heightened recruiting activity by the local teachers union. Both the NEA and AFT, having lost the recent [Janus v AFSCME Supreme Court Decision](#), have launched “recommitment drives,” calling on every current member to rejoin. Their hope is that these efforts will sweep into the union all the former agency fee payers as well as full members who may decide to drop their membership in the union since they will no longer be required to pay a fee if they don’t join.

AFT President Weingarten [announced](#), “Our recommitment program is rolling out in 10 states representing nearly 800,000 members directly affected by Janus. We are having one-to-one conversations with every member, including formal “recommits” to the union in writing. We’ve already won more than 500,000 recommits since the beginning of the year—200,000 in the past two months—and the momentum continues to build. Meanwhile, AFT affiliates across the country are strengthening their membership.”

NEA President Lilly Eskelsen Garcia said in an [interview with Education Week](#), “We’ve been doing membership drives of a very different nature all over the country, in all of our affiliates—person-to-person, human contact.”

Also, in some states the teacher unions have [worked with sympathetic state legislators](#) to develop legislation requiring new teachers to meet with the union. For example, the New Jersey [Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act](#) requires districts to share the contact information of new employees with the unions and also stipulates that the union has the “right to meet with newly hired employees...for a minimum of 30 minutes.”

Unfortunately, at this point there is no indication that the unions will reign-in their extreme rhetoric or left-wing positions to appeal to the many educators who are more moderate than the liberal union leadership. Long-time union and education watcher Andrew Rotherham [recently speculated](#) that because of this response by the unions, “The most likely outcome is somewhat paradoxical: teachers unions that are smaller but more strident than they are today.” If Rotherham is correct, teachers who do not wish to support the union may face some aggressive sales tactics. While this may at times be uncomfortable, it does offer an opportunity for Christian educators to be salt and light in the culture.

So, you should be prepared for requests by union members/recruiters to meet with you. It is likely that the unions will use a one-on-one approach to non-members and if they are smart they will ask the union member who has the best relationship with a non-member to be the one to “make the ask.”

**If you do not wish to join the union, you have no obligation to explain your reasoning to anyone. You should not be asked to sign anything saying you do not wish to join. In fact, one CEAI member recently was successful in avoiding a meeting simply by refusing the request, and when pressed, directed union officials to contact her attorney—which was CEAI.**

If you do meet, all you need to do is refuse to sign a union membership card. However, a gentle comment about why you have decided to not join may send a message to the union that they will need to become more moderate, or perhaps more supportive of freedom of religion for students and teachers, if they expect you to join. If enough educators do this, perhaps the unions will change their ways. More important, perhaps the representative you speak with will be convicted by the Holy Spirit that there is truth in your words and in your actions—the type of truth that everyone craves and our culture needs. Be sure to prepare yourself for the discussion though prayer and remember that the Holy Spirit will empower you with the right words to say if things get contentious. (Mk 13:11, Lk 12:12)

This is not the first time in history that Christian testimony has been vital to the culture, but not well received by unions. Paul’s first century testimony in Ephesus led to a major labor disturbance among the silversmiths and other craftsmen who made a living off pagan worship at the temple of Artemis. Demetrius, who may have been a craft guild leader, said, *“There is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship”* (Acts 19:27). While not every Christian will feel convicted to speak out against joining the local teachers union or even to leave the union, you can be sure that, if you are called to speak, a gentle and humble response will serve God’s purpose. Proverbs reminds us that “a gentle answer turns away wrath” (Prov. 15:1).

If you do wish to drop your union membership and meet resistance, or if the school district continues to take fees out of your check against your wishes, CEAI is here to help you. You can access information and resources from CEAI and the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation at [ceai.org/unions](http://ceai.org/unions). If you need more assistance or someone to pray with you, don’t hesitate to give us a call.

**Please share your own experiences with union back to school membership drives below. Your experience may be an encouragement to others.**

Personal comments may be addressed to the author at [JMitchell@ceai.org](mailto:JMitchell@ceai.org). John Mitchell is the Washington, DC Area Director for Christian Educators Association International.