

August 2019



Convention Moves NEA Further to the Left

As they have done for decades, NEA delegates from across the nation gathered over the Fourth of July for their Annual Delegate Assembly -- at least most of their delegates gathered.

Mike Antonucci, a longtime observer of the NEA, [reported in May](#) that NEA New Hampshire voted to boycott the Assembly over the site selection of Houston, Texas because of, “discriminatory policies against undocumented immigrants and the LGBTQ community in Houston and the state of Texas.” This served as a precursor to an Assembly that continued the NEA’s drift toward more liberal policies and deeper entrenchment in the divisive political and cultural battles of the day.

The biggest news to come out of the Assembly was passage of a New Business Item affirming that the NEA “stands on the fundamental right to abortion,” confirming what observers for many years said was obvious; that through their endorsements of pro-abortion political candidates and other advocacy, the NEA was a major supporter of abortion. CEAI Executive Director David Schmus responded to the NEA New Business Item with a [press release](#) saying, “NEA support for abortion, despite the fact it violently cuts short the lives of millions of future students and therefore reduces demand for teachers, reveals that the NEA is more about a political agenda than serving educators.” [Representatives of the Catholic Church](#) shared similar concerns.

Delegates also supported many other actions which had little to do with education but did further their broader political agenda. To fully understand the extent of this shift you may want to peruse all of their [new business items](#). Delegates did reject a few extreme positions, but adopted many others not mentioned here.

To build up their political war chest they created a new membership category of “community allies,” who are prohibited from “nominating, voting for, or holding any elected or appointed Association office or position.” But the community allies will be able to contribute up to \$5,000 each to the NEA’s political action fund. [Mike Antonucci noted](#) that the NEA’s political contributions from members have been dropping off in recent years and that it would only take 272 wealthy non-teacher donors to match what they raised from their 6,000 convention delegates last year. For many years the NEA stood proudly on the principle that only education employees could join the NEA—but that is now history.

To further leverage their political influence delegates also passed New Business Item 111 pledging to close schools for the Presidential election in 2020, “so that members, locals, and districts can participate in a day of action where school will not be in session.”

The Houston convention also weighed in on identity politics through passage of:

- New Business Item 11 directing the NEA to “incorporate the concept of [‘White Fragility’](#) into NEA trainings/staff development, literature, and other existing communications on social, gender, LGBTQIA, and racial justice whenever and wherever context and expense allows.”
- New Business Item 55 supporting the federal Equality Act that is [opposed by many Christians](#) and could compel public school teachers by Federal Law to affirm student transgender choices and gay marriage even if these are against their personal religious convictions.
- New Business Item 19 that promotes “the Black Lives Matter Week of Action in schools during Black History Month in 2020.” And beginning in the Fall of 2019 “demonstrate support for the four demands of the BLM Week of Action in schools:
 1. Ending zero-tolerance policies and replacing them with restorative justice practices
 2. Hiring and mentoring black educators
 3. Mandating that Ethnic Studies be taught in preK-12 schools in age-appropriate ways
 4. Hiring more counselors not cops:”
- New Business Item 20 establishing that at their 2020 Delegate Assembly, space will be created on delegate “name tags, badges, and IDs for the individuals’ pronouns. The individuals’ pronouns will only be left off at the individual’s request.”

To slow down the [exodus of affiliates](#) voting to disaffiliate from the National and State NEA affiliates, delegates changed the bylaws, enabling the NEA to [place errant local affiliates under trusteeship](#) and [established a cumbersome process](#), including a 2/3 vote of members, to

disaffiliate from the NEA. The most recent affiliate to leave their national and state associations was the [19,000-member California Faculty Association](#).

Little was said at the convention about the recent [Janus v AFSCME Supreme Court decision](#) which prohibits teachers and other public employees from being compelled to support the Association through payment of agency fees. The Janus decision did lead to [the loss of 88,000 NEA agency fee payers](#), but other membership drops were not as severe as anticipated. It could be too early to assess how large the drops in NEA membership might be as a result of Janus. In Michigan, where teachers were given similar rights in 2012, it took five years for the Michigan Education Association [to lose 25% of their membership](#).

For the many CEAI members who dropped their NEA membership to join CEAI, the news from this convention does not come as a surprise.

Many Christian teachers served as salt and light within the NEA for many years and many continue in this good work. While the actions of the delegates may make it seem that these efforts have been in vain, we know that is not true. Isaiah 55:11 tells us that the word of God will not return empty but accomplishes the purpose for which the Lord intends it. However, we may not always clearly understand the Lord's intent. Also, when attempting to engage winsomely in today's confusing and polarizing politics we must always keep in mind that there is a unity in Christ that far exceeds the cultural and political divisions tearing at our culture. (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:11).

Please share your thoughts on this column that you would like other readers to see by entering them in the form below. Personal comments can be sent to JMitchell@ceai.org. John Mitchell is the Washington, DC Area Director for Christian Educators Association International.