



# MINNESOTA EDUCATOR

A publication for the members of Education Minnesota

January 2018



## Elections matter

### Campaign activism to focus on member engagement

Almost 500 educators came to the Education Minnesota Political Conference last month, which kicked off our 2018 campaign work with a new focus on member engagement and activism.

"Remember this date: It's the start of our movement to reclaim the Capitol," said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht during a speech at the conference.

Specht and other speakers shared stories about why the 2018 election is so important for the future of public education and our union.

Up for election in 2018, will be a new governor, both U.S. Senate seats and all seats in the state House of Representatives.

The conference featured a gubernatorial candidate

forum with six DFL and two independent candidates for Minnesota governor.

Members submitted questions for the candidates when they registered for the conference, at the MEA conference in October and on social media. Education Minnesota collected the responses and created questions that represented the most popular and relevant topics. Members from around the state were chosen to ask the questions.

Candidates were asked about educator salaries, recruitment and retention, student loan debt, mental health services in schools and much more.

The forum was the first step in Education Minnesota's endorsement process for governor.

Electing pro-public education

candidates is important now more than ever to help make sure educators are successful in their work, which means students are successful in their lives, said Education Minnesota-Lakeville teacher and Education Minnesota Political Action Committee (PAC) member Leah Hood.

"Students cannot get what they need if their educators can't get what they need. The two are inextricably intertwined," Hood said.

Education Minnesota is focusing on new ways of reaching out to members about the importance of the 2018 election.

The new efforts will include:

#### Worksite political action leaders

More than 33,000 educators did not vote in the last gubernatorial election in 2014.

Watch the gubernatorial candidate forum on our website, [www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/politicalaction/Political-conference](http://www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/politicalaction/Political-conference), or on our Facebook page under Videos.

Education Minnesota wants to change that by focusing on a more personal engagement with members. Worksite leaders will be having one-on-one conversations with their colleagues about the education, union and pocketbook issues they care about and how those issues can be a motivating factor in voting in 2018.

#### Digital engagement

Members identified as digital engagement leaders will be given training and tools to effectively use social media platforms to increase member voting, civic participation and political action.

One of those tools is called

Hustle, a peer-to-peer mobile texting app. Digital engagement leaders will be using Hustle to recruit campaign volunteers within their locals and engage drop-off member voters next fall. Another tool, Voter Circle, is a web-based platform that allows users to send personalized emails and messages to friends in their contact lists about certain political candidates and/or issues. Live video and targeted social media ads are other ways Education Minnesota and local leaders will be engaging drop-off voters this election cycle.

Elections matter, page 8

#### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Read the special section on the importance of keeping strong unions in Minnesota. Then answer the question, "What is the most important thing you value in your union membership?" and send it to us via email, Twitter or Facebook to be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Target gift card.

Email us at [educator@edmn.org](mailto:educator@edmn.org) or post on Twitter or Facebook using #MNEducator. Find us on Facebook at Education Minnesota and on Twitter @EducationMN. Answers will be run in next month's Minnesota Educator.

Congratulations to last month's contest winner, **Chelsea Bowker** of St. Cloud.

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

**This issue features a special section dedicated to why unions matter.**

Public education and public-sector unions are under attack in states throughout this country, and at the national level. Education Minnesota wants our members to understand why these attacks are happening and the importance of keeping our union strong.

President Denise Specht reflects on the union's role in protecting members who want to speak out, especially women speaking out against harassment in the workplace. **Page 2**

Members share their stories about working in non-union schools, both in Wisconsin after Act 10 and at a charter school in Minnesota. **Page 3**

Keeping strong unions is important for the Minnesota economy and our state's quality of life. See comparisons of our state to right-to-work states throughout the country. **Page 4**

Wisconsin is now seeing the effects of the Act 10 legislation on the public education system and state economy. **Page 5**

Unions in Iowa saw their Legislature pass a law stripping them of their collective bargaining rights in just a few days. **Page 5**



# Unions are good for women, especially now

All women should be empowered to respond to sexual harassment without putting their careers at risk, fighting an entrenched bureaucracy alone or wasting time navigating a vague or changing policy in the employee handbook.

Union-negotiated contracts and state laws give Minnesota teachers that power, although both are under attack. Now that America is finally taking sexual harassment seriously, it's time to reconsider the decision by the 2017 Legislature to weaken Minnesota teachers' legal protections from on-the-job harassment and discriminatory layoffs.

The benefits of objective layoff criteria, including those based on seniority, extend to teachers who speak uncomfortable truths and, especially, to educators of color who often look different from their supervisors. The advantages to students of learning from experienced teachers are well known.

However, in the current moment, let's consider separately why unions are good for women.

Education Minnesota comprises more than 55,000 women (and nearly 17,000 men) who work in E-12 schools and, as their president, I read with incredible frustration the news accounts of women who remained silent for years after disgusting incidents of workplace harassment.

We can commend these women for coming forward when they did, but that's not enough. As a state, we need to face the imbalance of power



Denise Specht, president

in the workplace that forces too many women into the choice between quitting their jobs and enduring abuse. The strength that comes with union membership gives women the freedom to speak out.

For example, about 13 years ago, I was teaching second grade in a suburban elementary school in Minnesota. My class of 7- and 8-year-olds were reading stories with a partner when my classroom phone rang.

I picked up and an administrator in the district office let loose a river of vile, hateful words about my colleagues and me. Looking out at 25 pairs of little eyes while listening to such angry filth shocked me nearly to tears. I hung up. The children saw I was upset and that, in turn, upset them. We didn't have a productive day.

By the next morning, I had pulled myself together and resolved to fight back. If he had done that to me, he would do it to others.

I had earned tenure, so state law prevented the district from firing me

without due process. The school board had already signed off on a contract that set the layoff order, so a tricky administrator couldn't push me out in a trumped-up budget crisis.

Within hours of the horrible call, I had spoken with my union representative. Within days, I presented my complaint in person to the superintendent. Within a few months, the bullying administrator was gone. My union family stayed with me the whole time.

I can't say Education Minnesota and other unions have handled every case of harassment or bullying perfectly. The labor movement itself isn't blameless. However, I do believe organized worksites are still far better for women.

Part of the advantage is financial. The Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C., reports women in labor unions are better paid and more likely to have health insurance and pensions than women who negotiate their own compensation.

People in unions also command more respect from their employers and have a greater voice in how they do their jobs. We should never take that for granted.

The mix of better compensation and the freedom to stand up for yourself has led 14 new groups of educators to form unions and affiliate with Education Minnesota since January 2016. More are on the way. The educators at one school started unionizing, in part, because they wanted an

administrator to stop calling them "fat cows."

Those are the stories I think of when lawmakers write, as they did in a recent commentary in the Star Tribune of Minneapolis, about their pride in chipping away at objective layoff policies, including those based on seniority.

Teachers, like other professionals, tend to improve with experience. Pushing them out for suspicious reasons lowers the overall quality of teaching in a school and saddles the district with thousands of dollars of expenses for hiring and training new teachers—assuming the district can even find a new teacher during the current shortage.

The common response to concerns about losing contractual and legal protections from discrimination and harassment are assurances that state and federal agencies will enforce the laws already on the books. Harassment scandals in the statehouse, Congress and those surrounding the president do not reassure educators about the future of those laws. The budget deficits facing the state and nation will affect those enforcement agencies. If the choice is between relying on de-funded government departments and compromised politicians, or an enforceable contract and a member rights committee, we'll take the local control every time.

Finally, I'll share one more story from my own career in response to some lawmakers' suggestion that

teachers should uncritically accept the evaluations of their principals as the basis for layoffs.

I began teaching in a school district along the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. In my official evaluation after my first year, my principal gave me high marks for everything but professionalism. Why? He wrote that he wished he had seen me in a dress more often.

In this moment when harassment scandals are splashed across the front pages every day, I believe it's our duty as union members and educators to the push much harder to expand the benefits of our union to more people within education and in the wider economy. We could start with our colleagues in early childhood and adult education. There's much more to do for education support professionals. And it's time to find ways to give more due process and layoff protections to educators in their earliest years in the profession.

It won't be easy. There are technical, legal and, overwhelmingly, political hurdles to overcome. But it's a fight worth fighting because unions are good for all working people, but especially women, and especially now.

Together,

Twitter: @DeniseSpecht

*Note: A version of this column was printed in the Star Tribune of Minneapolis on Dec. 11.*

# How do you connect with, learn from and collaborate with colleagues or other educators?

*In last month's Minnesota Educator, we continued the "we want to hear from you" contest and received responses from all over the state via email and Twitter. Here is a selection of the answers. Look on page 1 for this month's question and how to submit an answer. Your answer enters you into a drawing for a \$25 Target gift card!*

"@EducationMN, I collaborate with colleagues and other educators with my collection of Facebook groups in the various areas I teach. They are the BEST PD! #MNEducator"  
— Chelsea Bowker, St. Cloud Education Association

"In my district, collaboration is built in through our Professional Learning Communities, which meet on a weekly basis. We also have optional Learning Academy classes offered throughout the year as well as multiple staff development days."

— Melissa Williams, Education Richfield

"I connect and collaborate with other educators by simply having lunch together every day! We problem-solve, share stories and connect on a personal level."

— Natalie Cass, Education Minnesota - Wrenshall

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By web: [www.educationminnesota.org](http://www.educationminnesota.org) and choose the Contact Us link to send a change of address.

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## Why our union matters now more than ever

Elected leaders at the national and state level have made it clear they want to weaken unions, the voice of working people and public education.

Why do they want to chip away at the effectiveness of unions? Because educators and other public workers are powerful and can affect change when we have a collective voice.

Minnesota educators enjoy better pay and pensions than educators in many other states because previous generations of educators fought for them. Teachers in so-called right-to-work states earn \$7,609 less on average than Minnesota teachers.

The power of educators to advocate for their profession and their students increases with each individual who chooses to work in union toward shared goals, but it weakens us all when even one educator opts out.

Those who want to weaken unions want more power in

the political process. Unions have fought for the rights of all Minnesotans, and we still have the responsibility to help alleviate the racism, discrimination and income inequality that hurt our students and their families.

The voices of the anti-union movement have become louder and stronger in recent years, and anti-union laws have hit our neighboring states of Wisconsin and Iowa.

If an anti-union governor is elected in 2018, Minnesota will almost undoubtedly be next to see this legislation.

That is why Education Minnesota launched our “Power of We” campaign to make sure our union stays strong.

**The focus of the “Power of We” is to:**

- Make sure that all members value their union. If they do not, we need to understand why and start improving.

- Make sure members unite to show administration, students, communities and each other that we are committed to working together to improve public education by renewing our commitment to the union with a signed membership renewal form.

Another threat is coming in the next few months, when the U.S. Supreme Court will hear a case regarding the constitutionality of public sector unions’ right to collect fair share or agency fees from nonmembers in a case known as Janus v. AFSCME Council 31.

The issue being discussed in Janus is whether under the Supreme Court’s ruling in Abood v. Detroit Board of Education the First Amendment permits a public employer to charge a fair share fee to employees who choose not to become members of a labor union,

but are still represented by the bargaining unit. The fee is to help cover the union’s costs of collective bargaining and grievance administration that are provided to those nonmembers.

The plaintiff, an Illinois state worker named Mark Janus, is arguing that it violates his rights to have to give part of his paycheck to a union whose mission he doesn’t support.

The court will most likely hear oral arguments in the case in February and the decision could come sometime between the end of March and the end of June.

Any decision that affects a union’s ability to collect fair share fees will in all likelihood require immediate compliance.

More information on the Janus case and other efforts to attack our union and public education, can be found at [www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy](http://www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy).

## We worked without a union

Act 10 was the legislation that stripped away the collective bargaining rights of unions of public employees in Wisconsin. Gov. Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature passed the law in the fall of 2011—my third year of teaching. Everyone in education immediately felt it.

I had due process protection, or tenure, for two weeks. I went from a \$0 copay on my insurance to having a \$2,000 deductible, to having a \$4,000 deductible. My administrators cut my prep time in half, so I had to rush to set up experiments. Sometimes we just skipped labs altogether. That’s no way to teach science.

I remember our negotiated contract became a handbook. The politicians told us we were now “free agents.” They said, “Go negotiate your own compensation!” But when I asked my superintendent what he could do for me, he said, “Nothing.” The law said we could negotiate for only our base salaries—and no increase could surpass inflation.

The law and the big-money ad campaign that went with it completely decimated morale in my district. We felt like we were being blamed for everyone else’s problems. When they take your dignity, teaching isn’t fun anymore. As teachers retired, the districts wouldn’t hire anyone to replace them. The duties and workload increased for the rest of us.

It all hurt students in the end. I don’t think anyone even tries to deny it anymore.

I was able to find work in Minnesota, but I was one of the lucky ones. Many of my colleagues had invested in a home in their community, had kids going to school in the district. It’s a big deal to uproot your family for a new job. I had the opportunity to leave and I did.

I returned to the district in Houston, Minnesota, where I started my career, after detours through Nevada and Wisconsin. I immediately received an \$11,000 raise, but it wasn’t really about the money. Sure, I had bills to pay just like everyone else, but it was about more than that. It was about hope.

A negotiated contract gives you control over some things in your work environment. It gives you a say in your benefits and class size. It comes with a degree of professional respect. Taking that away has a trickle-down effect on communities, schools and classrooms.



Marty Momsen

– Marty Momsen, science teacher, Houston Public Schools

I spent the first six years of my teaching career at a public charter school. We had no union, no contract; we were at-will employees.

I want to be very clear here that the people I worked with at the charter school were second to none. I loved what I taught, I loved my students and I loved my colleagues. In my view, we were a group of excellent educators working within and being taken advantage of by a bad system.

We had no salary schedule when I started. Teacher pay was all over the board and compensation was awarded in a haphazard manner with no real reason behind differences in pay between teachers.

I wasn’t rewarded for my years of experience. I wasn’t rewarded for my level of education. I wasn’t rewarded for my evaluation scores.

I only made around \$30,000 per year for my first few years and my health insurance covered only me—it did not and would not ever cover more than me—not my spouse, not any children we might have in the future, regardless of how long I worked there. I had no 403(b) and no matching contributions from the school.

After six years of performing very well, consistently, on quarterly evaluations using the Charlotte Danielson rubric, after earning a master’s degree and serving for three years as department head, I still only made \$36,000 per year.

For years, we had no clear job descriptions. I ended up being told to write a weekly K-8 newsletter for the entire school, plan all the field trips for the whole K-8 school, do lunch duty and recess duty and after-school duty. They even had me teaching choir one day a week for awhile because the part-time choir teacher was a yoga instructor who couldn’t make it to school on Fridays. I do not have a license to teach vocal music.

I tried to invest in the charter school and to be a part of positive change, but it is a system that is designed to allow administration to have all the power and that allows teachers to be devalued—and it has no intention of changing.

I realized as I advanced in my career that charter schools are not aligned with my personal or professional values and that I didn’t want to be a part of one anymore. I have now been at ISD 194 for four years and I have been happier and healthier since day one.



Leah Hood

– Leah Hood, social studies teacher, Lakeville Public Schools



# Why strong unions are important to Minnesota

Working in union gives educators the power to make meaningful improvements for students, our profession, public education and our communities.

But corporate interests want to destabilize unions through so-called right-to-work legislation at the national and state levels because we are the last line of defense for the middle class.

Kentucky, Missouri and Iowa just this year passed major legislation to erode union power and workers’ rights. There are also a slew of cases in the queue for the U.S. Supreme Court that will likely make right-to-work style laws the lay of the land for public employees.

This is also why it is important that we elect a pro-public education and pro-labor union governor in Minnesota in 2018.

By many measures, quality of life is worse in states with right-to-work laws. Wages are lower and people are less likely to have health insurance and the necessary resources for a quality education.

To see source data for the comparison chart on this page, go to <https://www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/attacks-on-unions/Attacks-on-unions-and-public-education>.

## Here’s a look at how Minnesota compares to 25 states that already have right-to-work laws on the books:

Measure	Minnesota	RTW state average	# of RTW states MN outperforms
Life expectancy	81.1	77.96	25 of 25
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	5.10	6.54	22 of 25
Poverty rate	10.20 percent	15.26 percent	25 of 25
Children under 6 living in poverty	8.0 percent	19.97 percent	25 of 25
Adults over 65 living in poverty	7.50 percent	9.24 percent	20 of 25
Share of population with high school diploma	92.40 percent	87.36 percent	25 of 25
Share of population with college degree	33.70 percent	26.28 percent	24 of 25
Personal per-capita income	\$50,541	\$43,213	22 of 25
Children without health insurance	4.50 percent	6.14 percent	19 of 25
Share of population without health insurance	5.20 percent	11.42 percent	25 of 25
Unemployment rate	3.80 percent	4.97 percent	20 of 25
Average teacher salaries	\$56,910	\$49,358	23 of 25
Per-pupil educational expenditures	\$11,510	\$9,879	22 of 25
SAT score (adjusted by participation rates)	1107	1055	25 of 25
ACT performance (adjusted by participation rates)	23.04	21.30	25 of 25

Note: there are now 28 “right-to-work” states. RTW legislation was enacted in Michigan in 2012 and Kentucky and Missouri in 2017. These states are not included among RTW states in this analysis because research suggests the impacts of anti-union legislation are not felt for several years following its passage. Most data from this report is from 2015 and 2016.

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# This could happen here, and it would affect our profession

It has been six years since the Wisconsin Legislature passed Act 10, the law that eliminated collective bargaining rights for most public-sector workers. In that time, the effects of the law on the education profession, the public education system and the state economy have been measured.

The Center for American Progress (CAP) recently released a report looking at the impact of the law and how it has changed education and the economy in Wisconsin. “Those concerned about the quality of public education—and of all public services—should understand that Wisconsin’s Act 10 and

associated budget cuts have not had the positive impact on education that its proponents claimed it would,” the CAP report states. According to the report, the authors’ analysis using data collected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) finds that, since the passage of Act 10, teachers have received

far lower compensation; turnover rates have increased; and teacher experience has dropped significantly. The harms from Act 10 extend beyond public-sector workers to all Wisconsinites, as the report suggests that student outcomes could be negatively affected by the law as well. Rather than encouraging the best and

brightest students to become teachers and to remain in the field throughout their career, the law appears to have had the opposite effect by devaluing teaching and driving many teachers out of Wisconsin’s public schools.

## HERE’S WHAT HAPPENED AFTER ACT 10 PASSED:

- Teacher compensation plummeted. Median compensation for Wisconsin teachers dropped \$10,483—or 12.6 percent—within four years. Most of that came from hits to retirement and health insurance contributions.
  - Employees started to pay half of their retirement contributions.
  - A minimum employee contribution for health care was also set for districts that use the state health plan. Gov. Scott Walker is also trying to force a minimum health insurance contribution for all school employees.
- More teachers left the profession. About 10.5 percent left after the 2010-11 school year, up from 6.4 percent in the year before Act 10 was implemented.
- Wealthier school districts poached experienced teachers from poorer districts. Interdistrict moves more than doubled.

## Act 10 and related tax cuts for the wealthiest and corporations did not spark the economic boon promised for all Wisconsinites by Gov. Walker.

- Wisconsin’s private-sector employment grew by 9.4 percent from January 2011 to June 2017. Private-sector jobs in Minnesota and the nation grew by 12.2 percent and 14.2 percent respectively during that same time period.
- Wisconsin’s median household saw a 6.8 percent increase in real income from 2010 to 2016, while the median Minnesota household saw its income grow by 7.5 percent.



IOWA

# This could happen here, and it could happen fast

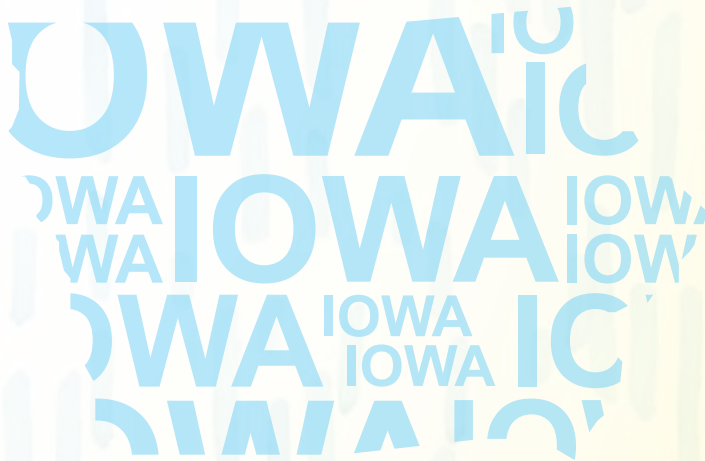
For many years, the Iowa State Senate acted as a goalie for public education and unions, stopping any legislation that would strip collective bargaining rights or harm the education system. But the 2016 elections brought a new reality to the state, with Republicans taking control of the Senate, as well as keeping control in the state House and governor’s office. And when the Legislature convened in January 2017, the new majority set its sights on public education and public employees. The collective bargaining law in Iowa had been in place for 40 years. It was taken away in just a matter of days.

“This isn’t union-busting. (This bill) goes further. It’s profession-busting,” said Tammy Wawro, president of the Iowa State Education Association, during the bill’s debate. “(Iowa legislators) have carved out the heart of what is important and vital to our profession and our ability to have a voice in the direction of our work environment.” The new law limits most public-sector union contract negotiations to only base wages. Unions are now banned from negotiating with their employers over issues such as health insurance, evaluation procedures, staff reduction and leaves of absence for

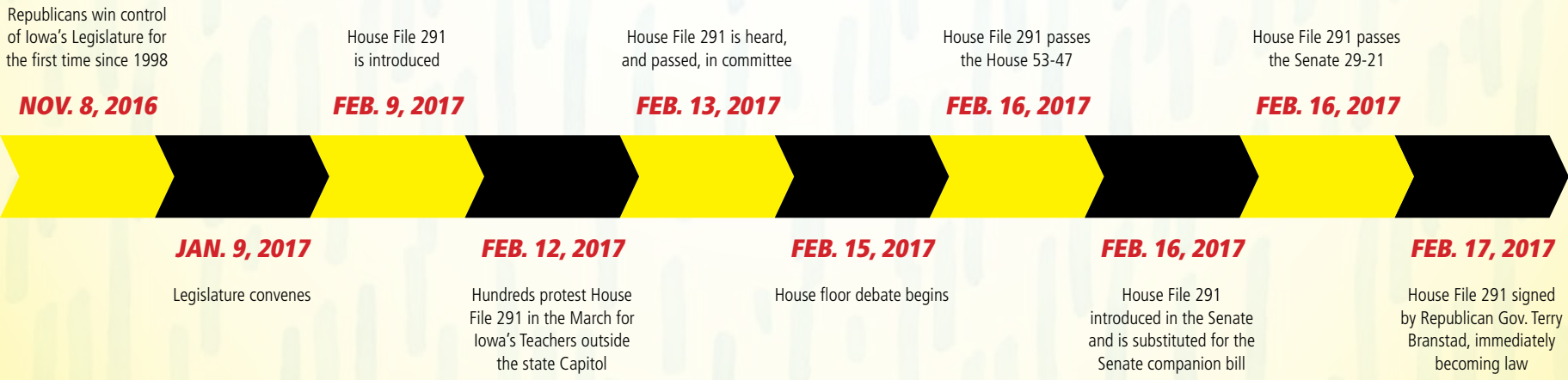
political purposes. The law also says that unions cannot have union dues deducted from public employees’ paychecks. Rules about negotiation impasses were also changed, requiring an arbitrator to consider the employer’s ability to finance any wage increase. It also puts a cap on how much an arbitrator can raise wages. The wage increase could not exceed whichever is lower: 3 percent, or a percent equal to the cost of living increase outlined in the consumer price index. Unions must recertify every time they face a new contract negotiation—typically every two or three years. And to recertify, unions need

a majority of all union members, regardless of the number of people who cast a vote. “The Iowa Legislature didn’t just change the terms of our bargaining agreement,

they changed Iowa forever,” said Wawro, during her speech at the 2017 Education Minnesota Representative Convention.



## Here is how quickly Iowa unions lost their collective bargaining rights:





# 2018 January/February Financial Planning Workshops

To meet the needs of Education Minnesota members, free workshops designed just for you, are planned for January and February. REGISTER TODAY!

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### Workshops for members with a TRA pension

- 1/18/2018 Education Minnesota – Apple Valley Office  
1/25/2018 Minneapolis Federation of Teachers (MFT), Local 59, Minneapolis  
2/6/2018 Education Minnesota – Brooklyn Park Office

### Workshops for members with a PERA pension

- 1/25/2018 Educational Support Professionals (ESP), Local 59, Minneapolis  
2/13/2018 St. Paul Federation of Teachers

### Workshops for members with a SPTRFA pension

- 2/13/2018 St. Paul Federation of Teachers, St. Paul

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## Financial and Retirement Planning Essentials Greater MN

### Workshops for members with a TRA pension

- 2/10/2018 Southwest Middle School – Little Theater, Albert Lea  
2/24/2018 Grand Casino, Hinckley

9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Registration / Rolls-Juice-Coffee  
10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Workshop / Boxed Lunch / Prizes

## TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED

### Pension education

Learn how benefits are calculated

Understand defined benefit pension plans

*Presented by: Chuck Elliott, Education Minnesota ESI Retirement Consultant  
Lyle Nelson, Education Minnesota ESI Retirement Consultant*

### Financial planning

What can you expect from Social Security?

Tax-deferred and tax-free savings

Asset allocation and asset management / diversification / performance and fees

403(b) match and severance payment options

Health insurance options prior to age 65 and Medicare supplement information

*Presented by: EFS Advisors*

### Asset protection

What is your financial vulnerability with long-term illness?

How can you protect your assets and savings?

*Presented by: Educators Lifetime Solutions*



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*Sincerely,*

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*President, Education Minnesota*



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[anna.whitehead@traditionllc.com](mailto:anna.whitehead@traditionllc.com)

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# EDUCATION MINNESOTA OPPORTUNITIES

## SECOND ANNUAL RACE EQUITY EDCAMP TO BE HELD JAN. 13

Education Minnesota will once again host an EdCamp, an all-day organic, participant-driven event on race and equity sponsored by our Minnesota Educator Academy. EdCamp Equity Minnesota will take place Saturday, Jan. 13, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Fridley High School, 6000 W. Moore Lake Drive NE, Fridley. EdCamps are professional development experiences, sometimes referred to as “unconferences.” Organizers set the schedule for the day but all sessions are determined by participants on the day of the event. Everyone is welcome to propose and lead a session where conversation and collaboration are paramount. Anyone interested in racial equity in education is welcome to attend. The event is free and open to the public. Lunch will be provided. Pre-registration is required. Go to [www.educationminnesota.org/resources/minnesota-educator-academy/Race-Equity-EdCamp](http://www.educationminnesota.org/resources/minnesota-educator-academy/Race-Equity-EdCamp) to sign up. If you’d like to bring a Race Equity EdCamp to your region, please contact Jen Kohan at [jen.kohan@edmn.org](mailto:jen.kohan@edmn.org).

### ABOUT THIS PAGE

The Minnesota Educator provides opportunities listings on this page as a member service, highlighting the free and low-cost professional development the union provides. The page also lists conferences, training and resources of possible interest. Readers interested in pursuing an opportunity should check it out carefully. The Educator tries to include only legitimate, useful opportunities that support education practice. **To submit an opportunity:**

- Send a complete description of your opportunity to [educator@edmn.org](mailto:educator@edmn.org).
- Send your item by the first Friday of the month to be considered for the next month’s Opportunities page. Include daytime contact information.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Peacekeeping circle facilitation workshop**  
The St. Paul Federation of Teachers Teaching & Learning Center is hosting a three-day training on deepening peacekeeping circle facilitation skills. The training will focus on circles for conflict, difficult conversations and complex situations. Topics will include: awareness of self in relationship to circle keeping; preparation for conflict circles; designing effective questions; strategies for finding consensus; responding to difficult challenges in circle; using multiple modalities in circle; self-care; interests of the group. Basic training in facilitating circles or experience as a circle facilitator is required. The training will take place Jan. 9-11 at the St. Paul Federation of Teachers office. The registration fee is \$250. Please contact Becky McCammon at [becky@spft.org](mailto:becky@spft.org) to register.

**Exploring race, racism and equity webinars**  
Education Minnesota’s ConnectED community is

hosting a series of webinars exploring race, racism and equity in education. Every other month, we will highlight an online community of professionals from across the country who are participating in the National Education Association platform, [myNEA360.org](http://myNEA360.org). Join other educators to learn, share and discuss ways you can address the racism, grow your understanding of equity and connect with other educators across the country. Register for one or all the free webinars. All webinars will be held 7-8 p.m. For more information or to register, go to [www.eventbrite.com/e/exploring-race-racism-equity-in-education-tickets-38893817455](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/exploring-race-racism-equity-in-education-tickets-38893817455).

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

**National civics essay, video contests**  
The Federal Bar Association is holding its second annual national civics essay contest posing the question: “What Does Equal Protection Mean to Students?” The contest reflects on the 150th anniversary of the 14th Amendment. This year’s essay contest holds a requirement of 500 to 1,000 words for submissions from high school students. Video submissions should run from three to five minutes. Students in 9th through 12th grade are invited to participate. Submissions are open through Feb. 28. For more information about the contest and how to submit essays and videos, go to [www.fedbar.org/Civics18](http://www.fedbar.org/Civics18).

**Girls Who Code summer workshops**  
Girls Who Code, the national nonprofit dedicated to closing the gender gap in technology, will be bringing workshops to the Minneapolis area this summer. The workshops will focus on a new program, Campus, which offers curriculum in a condensed two-week summer program. Campus programs help middle and high school girls of all abilities build their future in tech, get an edge for college and connect with girls with similar interests. For more information and to see the dates and

locations in Minnesota, go to <https://girlswhocode.com/Campus>.

### GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

**State arts board learning grant**  
Arts Learning is a grant program that offers funding for projects that help lifelong learners acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in the arts. Projects must provide participatory learning and engage learners with skilled teaching artists and high-quality artistic experiences. For the purpose of this program, arts learning happens when participants are engaged in creating, performing and/or responding to art in a disciplined and intentional way with a teaching artist. The Arts Board is offering a free online information session about the 2019 Arts Learning grant opportunity on Thursday, Jan. 18 at 3 p.m. Proposed projects must take place between Sept. 1, 2018 and Aug. 31, 2019. The deadline to submit applications is Feb. 16. To learn more, visit the Arts Board website at [www.arts.state.mn.us](http://www.arts.state.mn.us).

### DIGITAL RESOURCES

**Digital literacy curriculum**  
Teaching Tolerance presents a digital literacy initiative based on a framework that identifies competencies students need to be both responsible consumers and producers of online content. The most tech-savvy educators may not realize the complexity of how digital media (and the limitations of the human brain) shape our abilities to critically evaluate online information. “Learning the Landscape of Digital Literacy,” the publication that accompanies the Digital Literacy Framework, provides this context—a 101 on the obstacles separating us from a safe, civil and informed online experience. For more information or to see the full curriculum, go to [www.tolerance.org/magazine/presenting-teaching-tolerances-digital-literacy-framework](http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/presenting-teaching-tolerances-digital-literacy-framework).

## Elections matter *from page 1*

**Early voting**  
Minnesotans can vote starting Sept. 21. Education Minnesota will be encouraging members to use this as an organizing activity, to host early voting events at their worksite and for higher education members to organize early voting on their campuses for students and staff.

**NextGen EdMN engagement**  
Voters under 35 vote less frequently in midterm elections. The NextGen EdMN group will be offering peer-to-peer organizing tools for every local and campus chapter to plan social and family activities to encourage voting and political action.

**Endorsement process**  
Education Minnesota is also changing how its endorsement process works. To be considered for Education Minnesota’s endorsement for governor, candidates have to complete the following five steps:

- Participate in the political conference candidate forum.
- Spend a full- or half-day shadowing educators at work.
- Engage in a pocketbook and community issues roundtable conversation with educators.
- Complete a candidate questionnaire, created by educators, that will be shared publicly, and
- Participate in a screening interview with the

Education Minnesota PAC board. Reports of these activities will be shared on Education Minnesota’s website and social media accounts. To start the endorsement process, the PAC will also be doing something new. Each member of the PAC will be having at least 10 one-on-one conversations with members they represent who have been identified as drop-off voters, primary election voters, ESPs, student members and members of color. These one-on-ones will be happening in February and March. If members are interested in learning more about the new campaign activism programs, the trainings offered at the political conference are available to be presented in local unions or intermediate organizations. Another political conference is also being held in Bemidji in February. To find out who represents you on the PAC, to learn more about the 2018 campaign planning or to find information about additional conferences, go to [www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/politicalaction/Political-Action-Committee](http://www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/politicalaction/Political-Action-Committee).

**SAVE THE DATE!** The 2018 precinct caucuses for all parties will take place Tuesday, Feb. 6. More information on how to share pro-public education and pro-union resolutions will be in next month’s Minnesota Educator.



The political conference saw a large spike in newly-engaged members in attendance, especially ESP members. Minneapolis ESPs brought almost 20 members to the conference, which Local President Shaun Laden credits to their strong focus on organizing. “Some people say that getting out and organizing members doesn’t always work, but our attendance at the conference proves that it is worth the effort,” he said.