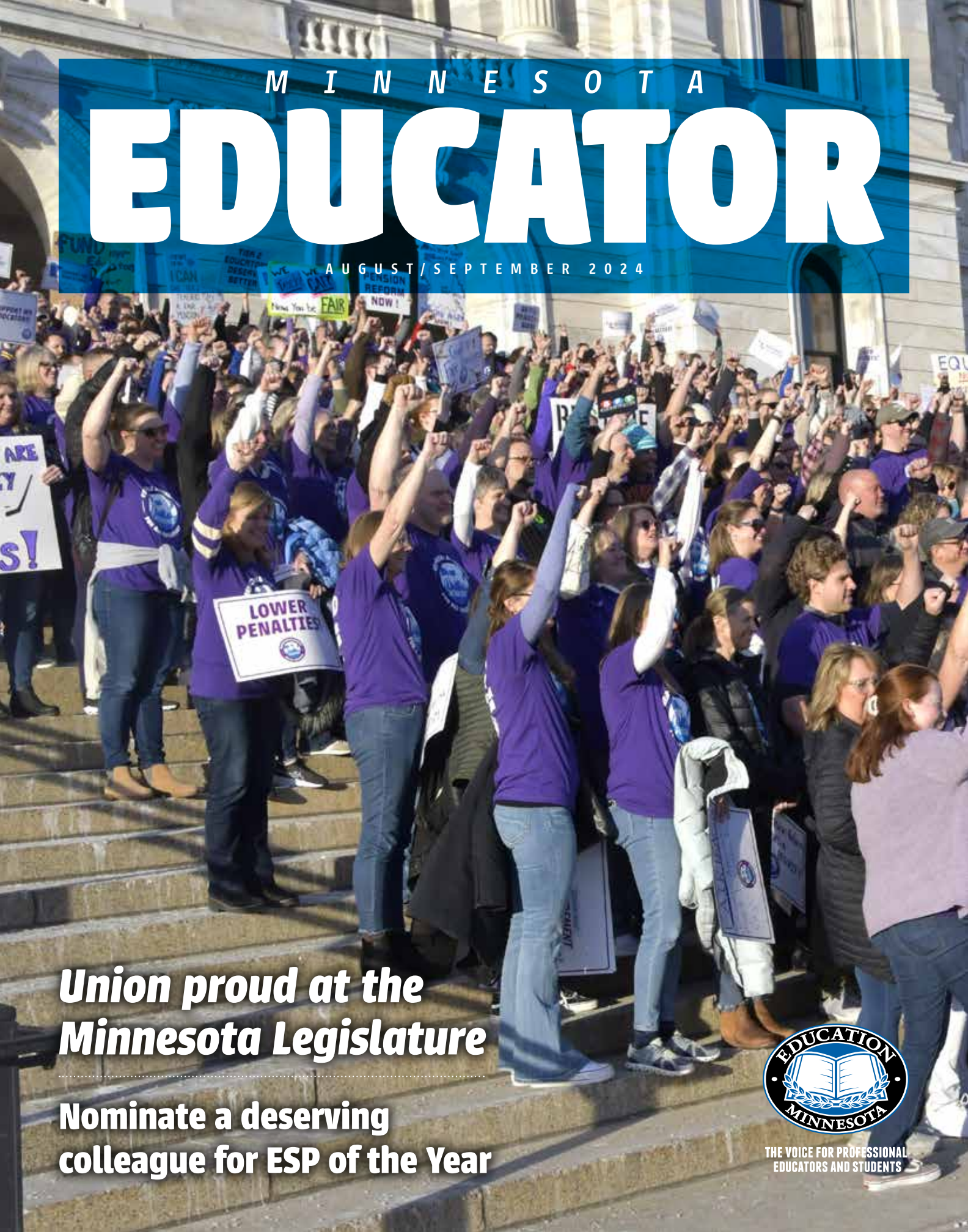


M I N N E S O T A

EDUCATOR

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2024



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ESI



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

August/September 2024 – Volume 27, No. 1

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The Minnesota Educator is published for members to share news about education issues and training opportunities for educators as well as union and political news that affects public education in Minnesota.

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Cover photo: *Ellen Perrault*

Stay engaged and tell the candidates what our students need

Answer the door. Accept the call. Click the link.

This is the time of year when politicians are reaching out looking for votes and for information about what their constituents care about. Please, don't ignore them.

However tempting the idea of disengaging until after Election Day may be, especially after the chaos of the past few weeks, we should try to stay focused and hopeful.

The candidates must hear from educators about what we're seeing at our worksites every day, our financial struggles and our visions for public education.

If they don't hear from their constituents one-to-one on the doors, on those calls and through those texts, they won't know how important the educators' priorities really are.

Instead, they may listen to the think tanks with very different goals for public education. For example, take the notorious Project 2025 from the right-wing Heritage Foundation.

Defunding public schools through vouchers is a core principle in the group's blueprint for American education. The intent is a national program that sends taxpayer money to private and religious schools that can and do discriminate against certain students.

Project 2025 also calls for the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education and eventually eliminating Title I, a key source of funding for schools with large populations of students living in poverty.

It would weaken the federal government's ability to enforce civil rights laws, including those that prohibit sex- and race-based discrimination, and it would eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program that has canceled millions of dollars in education debt held by Minnesota educators.

At the state level, many state House candidates this year enacted the largest increase in state education funding in a generation, which is paying for free school meals for all students, the largest pay raises most educators have seen in 20 years, free college tuition for many families and unemployment insurance for ESPs.

These pro-education candidates need to know about what we need next: More pay raises, pension improvements, workplace safety and someone to rein in greedy health insurance companies before they price more of us out of the profession.

To reverse the educator shortage and to deliver the world-class education our students deserve, we must make our case, educator-by-educator, to the candidates who will control the policy agenda and the budgets for the next few years.

Demand to know where the candidates for U.S. Congress stand on Project 2025's plans for public education, loan forgiveness and reproductive health care, the environment and labor unions.

Ask direct questions of the state House candidates about what they are willing to do to improve our worksites and our profession. Are they ready to make the largest corporations and wealthiest Minnesotans pay what they truly owe in taxes so every student can attend a school that prepares them to pursue their dreams?

If we get closer to Election Day and you haven't contacted your candidates directly, watch for endorsements from Education Minnesota. Local educators screen the candidates and make recommendations based on their responses.

But if you're like me and sitting and waiting isn't your style, step forward. Get involved with your local union's political program or volunteer for a candidate.

That knock on the door, call on the phone, or person behind the link? It might just be another educator trying to elect a candidate who will work for all of us.

Together,



 @DeniseSpecht



Denise Specht



Congratulations to Viann Nguyen-Feng of the University of Minnesota Duluth (UEA) for being this issue's winning submission!

We love seeing all the places you read your Minnesota Educator. Send a photo of where you're reading your Educator to educator@edmn.org to be entered into a drawing! Please include your name, your district or local and a one-sentence description of where you are reading.

The winner will receive a \$50 Target gift card and be featured in the next issue of Minnesota Educator. Happy reading!

Viann Nguyen-Feng poses with her Educator copy in front of the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.





Educators in the news

“The \$44,500 a year that a Rochester teacher pays to insurance [is] money that could be used for programming for students, lower class sizes, better salaries for teachers and education support professionals...we have a very concerning educator shortage in Minnesota, primarily due to low salaries. Those low salaries are primarily due to health care costs.”

Rochester Education Association President Vince Wagner in a June 10 MPR article titled “In historic contract cycle teachers saw highest raises, slowest pace to settle in 20 years.”

Getting social!

Stay connected with Education Minnesota by following us on our social media channels!

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-  [@educationMN](https://twitter.com/educationMN)
-  [@educationminnesota](https://tiktok.com/educationminnesota)


Connect with your local!

Each issue, we will select a couple of local unions' social media pages to highlight. Make sure to give them a follow to stay up to date on what's happening at the local level.

Follow Education Minnesota Lakeville on Facebook:

-  facebook.com/emlakeville

Follow Bemidji Education Association on Instagram:

-  [@bemidjieducationassociation](https://instagram.com/bemidjieducationassociation)

Community organizing, solidarity play key roles in contract wins for Minneapolis Federation of Teachers ESP

After working for over 300 days without a contract, the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers ESP chapter finally reached a tentative agreement with the district in early May, which bargaining team members described as “the best contract in 25 years.”

One of the biggest wins for the chapter is the reintroduction of automatic step increases, which were removed from the contract years ago. Starting in July of this year, eligible members recovered two steps on the salary schedule. In January, they will move up another step.

“We have been fighting for a decade to get automatic step increases back in our contract,” said Catina Taylor, president of the MFT ESP chapter. “This will help retain folks that plan on working in the district for years to come.”

In addition to automatic step movement, the new contract also includes:

- Longevity pay for employees between 10 and 40 years of service.
- A 4% cost of living increase for this year and a 6% cost of living increase starting in January.
- Religious and cultural observance days, so that employees do not have to use vacation, sick or comp time for religious or cultural observances.
- Sick time accrual for all hours worked, including overtime, bus aide hours and summer school hours.

Taylor said there were several factors that contributed to this successful contract. One factor was changing the relationship with the district. “New district leadership came in and they were willing to listen more and start to break the status quo,” Taylor said.

The biggest factor, however, was community organizing and support.

Before starting any community organizing work, the bargaining team made sure that members understood the power of solidarity and that they were fully committed to effective, long-term community organizing through

sharing information and building relationships with the public.

The main organizing goal was to make sure the community understood the bargaining process and knew what the local was fighting for. “In all our communications, we emphasized that we weren’t just asking for benefits for ourselves but for students as well,” said Taylor. “Every single person in this job is doing it for the kids.” Connecting their bargaining goals with student welfare showed parents and allies why supporting the union was important.

To accomplish this, MFT ESPs hosted informational picketing at targeted schools. As neighbors came up and asked about the picketing, members shared their stories and talked about why contract negotiations were important. The local began their community outreach in the spring of 2023, which provided ample time to build relationships with parents and community members.

“Eventually, we had neighbors bringing snacks and water and joining the picket line with MFT ESP members,” Taylor said.

The local also sought help from other organizations around the city. They drafted a letter outlining major issues facing the district that also tied into bargaining goals—shrinking budgets, decreased enrollment, educator turnover due to noncompetitive wages—which they invited these organizations to sign. The letter was eventually signed by more than 100 community organizations, including fellow labor unions, neighborhood associations, student groups, churches, nonprofits, advocacy groups and more.

Building up that community support allowed the local to bargain boldly and win a strong contract for members—and, Taylor says, they have the infrastructure in place to build on these wins during the next round of negotiations.

“I’m hoping that we can come back to the table and put the things we couldn’t get at the forefront, such as health care,” Taylor said.

Nominate a deserving colleague for ESP of the Year

Do you know an ESP who deserves to be recognized for their exemplary work? Nominate them for Education Minnesota's 2024-25 Education Support Professional of the Year Award!

Since 2007, the ESP of the Year program has recognized outstanding professional and union work by education support professionals across Minnesota. Nominees can be in any ESP job category, including paraprofessional, secretarial or clerical, custodial, food service, maintenance, trades, transportation, groundskeeping, security, technology services, health services and more.

Any current Education Minnesota ESP members whose membership started on or before Aug. 31, 2021, are eligible!

The ESP of the Year represents Minnesota ESPs and connects with their communities as an ambassador of the program. The Education Minnesota ESP of the Year will receive a \$1,200 honorarium and their choice of either a Chromebook, iPad or other tablet.

The winner will also serve as Minnesota's nominee for NEA's ESP of the Year program and will receive an expense-paid trip to the NEA Education Support Professional National Conference.

Nominations will remain open until Sep. 16, 2024. Once the nomination window closes, Education Minnesota will review all nominees and ensure that they meet the eligibility requirements. We will then contact eligible nominees and ask if they wish to continue as a candidate for ESP of the Year.

Once Education Minnesota has identified which nominees wish to continue as candidates, we review the nomination materials and narrow the candidates down to five finalists. The finalists are then notified of their status and scheduled for interviews with the Selection Committee, which is comprised of the Education Minnesota vice president, executive director, the most recent ESP of the Year awardee, a member of the Education Minnesota governing board, and a representative of another education stakeholder organization.

After the interview process, the Selection Committee makes their recommendation for ESP of the Year to the president of Education Minnesota. The winner is announced later in the fall and celebrated on ESP Day during American Education Week in November.

Candidates are judged based on five criteria:

1. Professional practice

This category looks at worksite responsibilities and personal achievements the nominee has made in their field. It examines how the nominee has demonstrated leadership, creativity and innovation at the worksite, along with how the candidate's professional growth has positively impacted the school, students and community.

2. Advocacy and association

This category considers how the candidate serves in the day-to-day education process as an advocate for members, the profession, and public education, along with how the candidate's involvement with Education Minnesota contributes to their professional success.

3. Community engagement

In this category, the selection committee reviews the candidate's involvement in promoting public education in the community.

4. Personal achievement

This category examines how involvement in Education Minnesota activities enables the nominee to meet their own personal goals.

5. Enhancement of ESP image

This category looks at how the candidate's activities enhance the image of education support professionals at their worksite, in the union and in the community.

To learn more about the program and to submit your ESP of the Year nominations, go to educationminnesota.com/news/awards-and-honors/esp-of-the-year



Educators win funding for pensions and training at the Legislature

The 2023-24 legislative session officially ended in May. The Legislature runs on a two-year cycle—the first year sets the budget, while the second year focuses on supplemental funding and policy changes.

Despite a tight non-budget year, lawmakers still prioritized support to current and future educators, who received a large amount of the one-time supplemental funding. We have provided a summary of the legislative session and answers to common questions below. If you have additional questions, please reach out to our lobby team at lobbyteam@edmn.org.

Education bills that passed this session

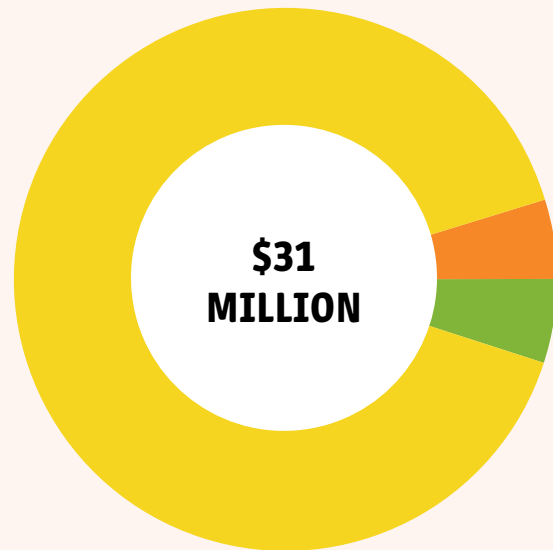
There were six major pieces of legislation pertaining to public education that passed this session. Those bills are listed below.

HF5040/SF4643 – Pensions

The only state funding to go to any pensions this year went to educators: the Legislature designated \$31 million to improve teacher pensions. This funding includes \$28 million for the Teachers' Retirement Association, \$1.5 million for the Saint Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund Association and \$1.5 million for the IRAP to TRA transfer account for college faculty.

“Teachers retiring this summer will save thousands of dollars that otherwise would have been lost to early retirement penalties.”

The TRA money implements a new, lower normal retirement age that is a year earlier than scheduled. Teachers retiring this summer will save thousands of dollars that otherwise would have been lost to early retirement penalties. For Saint Paul TRA, the money will ease scheduled increases to employee contributions until 2026.



- **\$28 million:** Teachers' Retirement Association
- **1.5 million:** Saint Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund Association
- **1.5 million:** IRAP to TRA transfer account for college faculty

The pensions bill also allows a new bargaining topic: student loan payments can now be allowed to count towards an employer 403b match.

HF5237/SF5252 – Education Finance

This bill focuses on funding for new programs and providing clarifying information about funding, along with additional resources for programs passed last year. These programs include the READ Act, the Educator Compensation Working Group, the student teacher pay pilot program and clarification on highly qualified ESPs.

READ Act

The Legislature provided more funding and additional guidance for the READ Act, the literacy initiative passed in 2023. This supplemental funding includes \$31 million for employee stipends for training in literacy instruction, along with \$35 million for other supports around these

trainings and \$1 million for curriculum updates to ensure that curricula is culturally relevant.

For employees to receive these stipends, the local must negotiate an MOU with the district.

Educator Compensation Working Group

This bill includes the creation of an Educator Compensation Working Group that will bring together educators and legislators to discuss how below-market compensation for both teachers and ESPs contributes to the teacher shortage and to suggest solutions to address lagging educator pay. The group must bring their findings to the Legislature by Feb. 15, 2025.

Student Teacher Pay Pilot

As we covered in the last issue, the Legislature approved \$6.5 million for a pilot program to pay student teachers for their training time in Minnesota classrooms. The program will cover about half of student teachers during the 2024-25 school year. Eligible institutions include St. Cloud State, Bemidji State, MSU Mankato, Winona State, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, UMN – Duluth, UMN – Crookston and Augsburg University.

Highly qualified ESPs

This bill also includes necessary changes to the “highly qualified” licensure requirement for special education and Title I school paraprofessionals, including training modules, adjusting the competency grid and clarifying the special education funding formula. The Legislature also made changes to ensure that ESPs are paid for early-release and delayed-start days. The changes also require school districts to include ESPs on district professional development committees to ensure that all workers have a voice at the table.

“The changes require school districts to include ESPs on professional development committees to ensure that all workers have a voice at the table.”

HF 3782/SF 3567 – Education Policy Bill

This bill includes changes, updates and clarifications to several education policies, including school cell phone policies, a ban on book bans, telehealth space requirements, ableism training, READ Act clarifications, special education licensure, charter schools and more. While this bill covers similar provisions as the finance bill, this one does not address funding.

School cell phone policies

This section requires districts and charter schools to adopt policies on students’ possession and use of cell phones in school. It requires the principals’ associations to collaborate to make available guidance on best practices and strategies to minimize the impact of cell phones on student behavior, mental health and academic attainment.

Schools must have their policies in place by March 15, 2025.

Banning book bans

This section prohibits a public library or a school library from banning, removing, or otherwise restricting access to a book/material based solely on its viewpoint or the messages, ideas or opinions it conveys.

Mental health instruction and telehealth space

These provisions require districts and charter schools to provide students in grades four through 12 with mental health instruction that aligns with local health standards, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. The telehealth space policy requires school districts and charter schools to provide high school students with access to private spaces to receive mental health care via telehealth.

Ableism Training

This provision encourages districts and charter schools to include training on ableism and disability justice in professional activities for teachers and other staff. This training must be provided by a person with a disability and expertise related to ableism and disability justice.

READ Act

This section increases the number of literacy screenings for kindergarten through grade three students from twice yearly to three times yearly and allows schools to reduce instructional hours by 5.5 hours if that time is used for READ Act professional development.

Special Education Licensure

This section requires PELSB to establish a working group on special education licensure reciprocity and requires the group to submit a report to the Legislature by Feb. 1, 2025.

Charter Schools

This section makes changes to charter schools to increase services, accountability and best practices for charter schools. These policies include a requirement that charter schools adopt a language access plan—like the one school districts must adopt—to better serve English Language Learners. This provision also includes improvements in nepotism policy, training for charter school leaders, establishing an open bidding process and more rigorous market study before opening or expanding charter schools.

HF 3182/SF 3204 – Public Employee Insurance Plan modification

This bill is intended to address startling price hikes from health insurance corporations and provide relief for educators by modifying PEIP to stabilize the health care pool, ensuring that employee groups stay for at least four years—with the stipulation that employee groups can leave if facing extreme increases (over 20%). This is a best practice for reducing costs that should make the program a more competitive choice for educators.

HF 4077/SF 4097 – Commerce bill

This bill contains a transparency provision that requires health insurance carriers to specify the full cost of a policy when submitting bids to school districts. Under this law, health insurance companies will have to break down their costs by price per member per month and include broker fees. This enables a more apples-to-apples comparison of bids—something that was not possible before.

HF 5247/SF 5234 – Earned Sick and Safe Time (included in the tax omnibus bill)

Within the omnibus tax bill is a bill that supports the implementation of ESST by clarifying that all sick leave counts as ESST and there is no need to maintain two “buckets” (as some districts have contended). This bill also establishes that employers may negotiate a waiver to self-attestation provisions in law to document use of ESST, although **Education Minnesota does not recommend locals agree to this kind of waiver.**

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PAC donations support pro-public education candidates, local election assistance

The Education Minnesota Political Action Committee is funded by \$25 donations from members, separate from dues, and goes towards building political power through supporting pro-public education, pro-labor candidates and elected officials at all levels of government. The PAC is one of the union's most powerful tools to bring educator voices into state and local politics.

Nowhere is this more important than at the local level—particularly in school board races. We elect our bosses when we vote for school board, and who sits on the school board impacts everything from salary, to budget, to length of the school year, benefits, health care, testing and more.

In 2022 and 2023, Minnesota saw an unprecedented influx of anti-public education school board candidates, supported by groups like the Minnesota Parents' Alliance, Moms for Liberty and the Minnesota Child Protection League (an anti-LGBTQ hate group*). These candidates ran on platforms seeking to limit students' freedom to learn, whitewash history, prevent certain students from feeling safe and welcome in their classrooms and weaken unions.

We will face more of these candidates in 2024. These anti-public education groups, linked to billionaires with near-limitless financial resources, have already begun recruiting school board candidates for this cycle. While we do not have their bottomless financial resources, we do have the collective power of our union and public trust in educators. It is up to us to use every tool at our disposal to fight back against these attacks on our public schools and elect school board members who will support all students and educators.

State-level politics are also important. While other states' legislative sessions resulted in book bans, targeted attacks on LGBTQ+ students and educators or drastic expansion of voucher schemes, Minnesota's legislative session saw pro-educator, pro-student policies—including 12 weeks of paid family medical

leave, a ban on book bans to protect the freedom to learn and universal school meals to ensure that no Minnesota child goes hungry.

Your PAC donations helped make that happen.

What does the PAC Board do?

The PAC Board is made up of volunteer members from across the state and includes a member from each of the union election districts. These members discuss and determine the campaign plan for each election, including the endorsement process, how PAC dollars

Case study: Chisago Lakes

For years, Chisago Lakes school district had school board candidates who generally ran unopposed. Some years, they did not even have enough candidates file to run. The lack of competitive elections led to complacency among board members, many of whom simply rubber-stamped the recommendations of the superintendent and business manager with little or no debate. This created a district culture of top-down management, with unilateral decision making instead of a representative board working collaboratively.

In 2020, the local decided to get involved in school board elections and, with financial support from the Education Minnesota PAC, endorsed and elected their local union president to the school board. They built on that momentum in 2022, again working with the PAC to endorse and elect two more school board members. In 2023, a school board member resigned and the local elected another union-endorsed candidate – giving pro-public education, pro-union members a majority on the board.

“It is our belief that this [majority] helped us achieve an equitable contract during negotiations and will go a long way in winning back community support down the road,” said Jeremy Peterson, geography teacher and PAC board member.

*According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, splcenter.org/states/minnesota

will be spent and the support that will be provided to local elections and referendums.

The PAC Board determines how the endorsement process will work. Currently, the process requires candidates to fill out a questionnaire and meet with educators from their area for an interview. Those educators recommend a candidate for endorsement, which is then approved by the PAC Board.

How are PAC dollars spent?

Much of the PAC money is spent supporting candidates that Education Minnesota has endorsed, but a significant portion of the budget goes to member organizing and support for local elections, such as school board races.

Education Minnesota also seeks PAC support from the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, and this year we have received over \$100,000 from both organizations to help locals get involved in school board elections.

To further support this goal, the PAC has quintupled its funding for voter outreach in school board elections. This PAC funding includes four pieces of mail sent directly to voters in the district (locals pay only \$1 per member for each piece of mail), stipends for phone bank coordinators and additional funds for food and incidentals incurred by members while doing campaign work.

What does politics have to do with my classroom?

Who makes the decisions on these important issues?

Your salary	School board, union
School budget	School board
Class size/workload	School board, state Legislature, governor
Length of school year	School board, state Legislature, governor
Health benefits	School board, union
Due process	School board, state Legislature, governor
Retirement benefits	School board, state Legislature, governor
Testing	Federal, state, school board
Hiring practices	School board, state Legislature, governor
Teaching credentials	Federal, state, governor
Standards	State board, state, federal
Unemployment compensation	Federal, state, governor
Textbooks	State, school board
Negotiated contracts in higher education	State Legislature, local union, governor
Higher education credentialing	Governor
Campus repairs and upgrades	State Legislature

A robust voter outreach program is key to effectively fighting back against anti-public education groups, and when Education Minnesota endorses, candidates win. In locals that use PAC funds to make endorsements and carry out a strong voter outreach plan, the local's endorsed candidates win more than 80 percent of the time.

Why is voter outreach so important?

Politics impacts so much of our members' daily lives. When pro-public education, pro-labor elected officials are in power, public-school employees can focus on what they do best—educating—instead of worrying about whether extremist, anti-public education policymakers will try to slash their funding, downsize their district and stall contract negotiations.

During the 2023-2024 legislative session, Minnesota had pro-public education majorities in both legislative chambers and in the governor's office. This trifecta allowed lawmakers to pass historic investments in public education and take significant steps to alleviate the teacher shortage. *For a detailed summary of the legislative session, please see pages 7-9.*

If we keep this Legislative majority, then we will be able to build on these gains and tackle important issues like increasing access to affordable health care, increasing teacher pay and protecting the freedom to learn. If local unions get involved in school board elections, we can ensure that our schools are represented by individuals who share our goal of providing the public schools that Minnesota students and educators deserve.

Learn more at edmnvotes.org.

Education Minnesota endorsed candidates

Over the past few weeks, Education Minnesota members have participated in candidate screenings at the local and statewide levels. The Education Minnesota Political Action Committee, made up of members from across the state, have recommended the following candidates for election as of July 15. Some candidate screenings are still ongoing, and we will continue to release endorsements throughout the campaign season. Education Minnesota members are marked with an asterisk.

Make sure to check out edmnvotes.org for updates!

Minnesota House of Representatives

House District 8A: Peter Johnson

House District 8B: Alicia (Liish) Kozlowski

House District 11A: Pete Radosevich

House District 11B: Eric Olson

House District 14A: Abdi Daisane

House District 14B: Dan Wolgamott

House District 15A: Anthony M Studemann

House District 18A: Jeff Brand

House District 18B: Luke Frederick

House District 19A: Jessica Navarro

House District 21B: Jon Wilson

House District 22B: Sara Nett-Torgrimson

House District 33B: Josiah Hill*

House District 36A: Janelle Calhoun

House District 40B: Curtis Johnson

House District 41A: Lucia Wroblewski

House District 41B: Jen Fox

House District 44A: Peter M Fischer

House District 51A: Michael Howard

House District 52A: Liz Reyer

House District 52B: Bianca Virnig

House District 54B: Jean Lee

House District 56A: Robert Bierman

House District 56B: John Huot

House District 57A: Veda Kanitz*

House District 58A: Kristi Pursell

House District 58B: Ian English

Why educators continue to choose union

No matter your role, working in a public school is one of the most difficult jobs, and it only gets more difficult as educators continue to face unprecedented challenges in their classrooms. But educators don't have to face these challenges alone—by coming together through our union, our members find support and build collective power to advocate for our students, colleagues and communities.

When you join Education Minnesota, you join more than 87,000 educators across the state working together to negotiate fair contracts and advocate for strong public schools. Your Education Minnesota dues also make you a member of your local union, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO.

Where do my dues go?

Your dues fund Education Minnesota's work to support members every day and promote union values, provide welcoming and relevant opportunities, focus on the recruitment and retention of members while providing programming for our members to ensure strong locals in the future.

49%

Advocate for your career:

Negotiating contracts, improving local learning and working conditions and fighting for fair wages and benefits.

15%

Voice for public education: *A voice in policymaking and lawmaking at the local, state and national level.*

9%

Professional growth: *Hundreds of local, regional and statewide trainings.*

4%

Champion for our students and community: *Establishing positive relationships with our allies and the community.*

The rest—23%—goes towards union governance and infrastructure. That includes rent, utilities, equipment and tech support for 13 offices across the state.

Who is Education Minnesota's leadership?

Education Minnesota leadership consists of three officers—president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer—and a 47-member governing board representing all parts of the state. Each of these leaders is elected by members and their purpose is to ensure the union's organizational priorities are driven by members.

Every spring, hundreds of elected delegates attend the Representative Convention to set the organization's goals and policy direction. The governing board and officers meet throughout the year to adopt a budget, set dues and carry out the action items passed at the Representative Convention.

Our organizational priorities are:

- **Racial equity and social justice:** Co-create equitable schools and anti-racist unions that welcome all students and educators, no matter their race, sexuality, economic status, religion, abilities or zip code.
- **Full funding for strong public schools:** Establish a full and permanent funding system for public schools that guarantees students and educators have the resources they need to deliver the education our students deserve—from early childhood to post-secondary.
- **Strong locals:** Empower locals and members working collectively to be strong, trusted advocates for public education at the local and state levels.

Member-led standing committees

In addition to the officers and the governing board, Education Minnesota also has several standing committees, made up of members from across Minnesota. These committees each have a different focus, allowing members to work on the issues they care about most.

We have five standing committees:

- The Council of Local Presidents, which works with Education Minnesota leadership to communicate concerns and serves as a liaison between Education Minnesota and local presidents.
- The Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, which advises the Human Rights Committee on ethnic minority issues in Education Minnesota and our schools;
- The Political Action Committee, which promotes the improvement of public schools through increasing political action among members and electing candidates who support Education Minnesota's mission;
- The Legislative Action Committee, which considers and recommends legislative positions to the elected officers and leaders of Education Minnesota.

- The Professional Advocacy Committee, which considers and recommends policies and programs to the elected officers and other leaders regarding matters pertinent to the professional lives of members.

Our history

Education Minnesota was formed in 1998 when the Minnesota Education Association and the Minnesota Federation of Teachers merged. MEA, originally called the Minnesota State Teachers Association, started in 1861. MFT, originally known as the Grade Teachers Organization, was founded in 1898.

Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO. Through your membership, you belong to these organizations that collaborate to provide a unified voice for public education and for educators.

To learn more about Education Minnesota's leadership and history, view the full list of standing committees or find out who represents you on the governing board, check out the "About Us" section of our website, educationminnesota.org.

Filing period open for Education Minnesota officers, NEA director positions

Candidate filings for Education Minnesota officers and National Education Association director positions are now open.

The three-year terms for president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer that started in 2022 will end on June 30, 2025. Eligible members who wish to run for any of these offices must submit the filing form below to the Education Minnesota Office of the Elections Committee by Dec. 13.

Filing forms can also be completed and submitted electronically through the website at educationminnesota.org/members-only/governance/elections/#filingforms.

Currently, these offices are held by President Denise Specht, Vice President Monica Byron and Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe.

The terms for the two NEA director positions currently held by Jasman Myers and Heather Bakke will also expire next year.

To be an eligible candidate for any of these positions, an individual must be an active Education Minnesota member at the time of filing and throughout the election process. Candidates may only file for one of the positions listed above.

Filing Form for NEA Director

This form must be filed with the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for the following position:

You may only select one position:

NEA Director (Position 1) **NEA Director (Position 2)**

Candidate information

Mailing address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on June 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 13, 2024.

Scan and email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org by Dec. 20, 2024.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

Filing Form for Officer

This form must be filed with the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for the following position:

You may only select one position:

President **Vice President** **Secretary-Treasurer**

Candidate information

Mailing address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on June 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 13, 2024.

Scan and email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org by Dec. 20, 2024.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.



Join fellow educators at the annual MEA conference this October

Education Minnesota members and college students studying to be educators are invited to attend the annual MEA conference. This conference, held on the third Thursday in October, is the biggest professional development event for educators in Minnesota. It will be held at the St. Paul RiverCentre in downtown St. Paul on Oct. 17.

Attendees can earn continuing education credits for attending the workshops offered at MEA. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance at the end of each workshop they attend, but local continuing education committees determine whether to approve the credit. In addition, some sessions may help fulfill state relicensure requirements in reading instruction, identifying early-onset mental illness in students, cultural competency, positive behavioral interventions, English language learners and suicide prevention. Check with your district's continuing education committee on whether you will receive credit.

One question we are often asked is why the MEA conference is held in October instead of over the summer when schools are not in session. MEA is held in October for several reasons: it allows educators to immediately begin using the skills they've learned, which provides the greatest benefit for student

learning, and it allows more educators to attend. Many educators spend their summers either taking continuing education courses to stay current in their field or working to supplement their salaries. Holding MEA in the fall allows more educators to take advantage of this professional development opportunity.

Fortunately, most school districts choose to make MEA day a non-school day, although some districts do not. Some districts may require local training on MEA day, so check with your district to see what their policy is.

Education Minnesota offers free childcare for conference attendees. This service is open to children from ages six months to 10 years and will be available from 8 am to 4:45 pm on site at the St. Paul RiverCentre. Attendees should register for childcare when they register for the conference.

Can't make it? No problem! Courses are available to members year-round through Education Minnesota's MEA Online portal. Both the conference and MEA Online are free of charge but are only open to members of Education Minnesota.

Advanced registration is required to attend MEA and the registration link will open towards the start of the school year. Learn more at educationminnesota.org/events/annual-events/mea-conference.

BRAVE program provides support and empowerment to early career educators

Barika Davis was looking for community—specifically, fellow teachers who could understand the challenges facing a new public-school educator.

Davis, an early childhood special education teacher in St. Cloud, had worked for years in early childhood care but was new to public education. She had professional learning through her district and support through the African American Educators Forum, but she found herself wanting to talk to others who were also new to the classroom.

“When you go to your professional learning group, often you’re with teachers that have 10, 15, 20 years of experience...they might have ideas or suggestions, but sometimes you just need someone who is feeling the same things you’re feeling right now,” Davis said.

Davis saw an advertisement for Education Minnesota’s Building Resilience and Voice with Early Career Educators program that piqued her interest. She showed it to some colleagues, who encouraged her to apply.

The BRAVE program is designed for educators within the first five years of their education career. Participants can be fresh out of college or, like Davis, can be new to the classroom after a career change. The program provides an opportunity to connect with other early career educators while learning how to have brave conversations and implement racial equity and social justice in the classroom.

Using the book “Onward” by Elena Aguilar, BRAVE participants receive support, mentorship and strategies for creating a sustainable teaching approach. Discussion topics include establishing work/life balance, building culturally responsive classrooms, utilizing trauma-informed instructional practices and developing skills to advocate for their students and schools. The program consists of five cohort-based sessions that provide participants with time and space to build relationships with newer colleagues across the state who are dealing with the same challenges in their own classrooms and locals.

Davis said it was exactly the kind of collaborative community she was looking for.

“We create a sense of belonging for our students in our classrooms but sometimes we forget that as teachers we need to fill ourselves up. My cohort provided a space for us to fill each other up and find that belonging,” she said. “We would go through [Onward] and have intentional discussions about what we were feeling and give each other different strategies and feedback based on what was happening in our own districts.”

The BRAVE program begins in December and runs through the spring. It consists of four virtual sessions that run from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and ends with an in-person session in St. Paul. Participants are eligible for 30 continuing education units upon course completion.

This program is a benefit of membership and is available to all Education Minnesota members within their first five years of teaching at no additional cost.

Davis encourages everyone who is eligible to apply. “If you want a place that creates a sense of trust, partnership, respect, diverse perspectives and mentorship—this program is for you,” she said.

Applications will open in early October. To learn more about the program, visit edmn.me/brave.



Education Minnesota member and BRAVE participant Barika Davis during the “Cohort Connection” session of the final in-person meeting for the program.

The Supreme Court's Radical Term— And What Voters Can Do About It

By Eva Wood, Education Minnesota staff attorney

The Supreme Court has long been viewed as a non-partisan branch of the government, separate from the division of the legislative and executive branches. That traditional reputation of fairmindedness has begun to fade in the face of increasing partisan gamesmanship on and about the Court. In an unprecedented move, Senate Republicans refused to allow President Obama's nominee to have a confirmation hearing until after the 2016 election. President Trump then appointed three justices, including one only a month before the 2020 election. Each of the justices nominated by President Trump professed in their hearings that they would uphold Supreme Court precedent, but they have since undertaken a radical remaking of American constitutional law, overturning decisions that have been affirmed and relied upon for decades.

In 2022 and 2023 we saw reproductive rights decimated by *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022), common sense gun reform blocked in *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen* (2022), public education attacked in *Carson v. Makin* (2022); and anti-discrimination laws undercut by *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis* (2023). 2024 continues the trend of rulings that pose grave threats to our democracy.

Trump v. United States

In a baffling decision, a divided Supreme Court ruled that former presidents can never be prosecuted for actions relating to the core powers of their office, and that there is at least a presumption that they have immunity for their official acts more broadly. No such immunity is provided in the text of the constitution itself.

Writing for the party-line majority, Chief Justice Roberts says that "the president is not above the law." However, this is difficult to square with the expansive way the Court chose to define "official acts." The majority took the view that a president's "official responsibilities... cover actions so long as they are not manifestly or palpably beyond his authority." Still more alarmingly,

This Legal Briefs column, written by Education Minnesota attorneys, is one of an occasional series on legal developments that affect educators.

the majority opined that the courts cannot consider the president's motives when determining official acts, nor can they designate an act as unofficial simply because it allegedly violates the law.

The case now returns to the lower courts, who must determine whether the conduct in the various cases involving the former president is "official" or "private acts." In practice, the decision creates a sufficient delay that the former president's trials are unlikely to be resolved before the election, creating a practical barrier to holding a president accountable for even flagrant, public criminal activity.

Loper Bright v. Raimondo

The Supreme Court also held that the Administrative Procedure Act requires courts to decide whether an agency has acted within its statutory authority. It overruled the deference traditionally extended to agencies through *Chevron v. Natural Resources Defense Council*.

Under the traditional *Chevron* doctrine, courts were required to uphold an agency's reasonable interpretation of a statute if Congress has not directly addressed the question at the center of a dispute. While the doctrine was not originally regarded as particularly consequential, it has become a pillar of federal administrative law cited by federal courts more than 18,000 times.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Roberts argued that *Chevron* deference is inconsistent with the Administrative Procedure Act, a federal law that establishes the procedures that federal agencies

must follow and sets guidelines for courts that review agency actions. The APA, Roberts noted, directs courts to “decide legal questions by applying their own judgment” and therefore “makes clear that agency interpretations of statutes—like agency interpretations of the Constitution—are not entitled to deference. Under the APA,” Roberts concluded, “it thus remains the responsibility of the court to decide whether the law means what the agency says.”

Snyder v. United States

Continuing the theme of insulating public officials from legal consequences for criminal activity, the Republican majority also limited the scope of federal anti-bribery law.

In this case, the former mayor of Portage, Indiana, was convicted and sentenced to 21 months in prison for violating a law that bars government officials from “corruptly” accepting “anything of value of any person, intending to be influenced or rewarded” for an official act. In 2014, Snyder received \$13,000 from a truck company that was awarded contracts totaling over \$1 million for new trash trucks for the city. Snyder maintains that the payment was for consulting services, but federal prosecutors called it an illegal gratuity.

The majority argued that the payment was merely a “gratuity” not a “bribe” because it occurred after the mayor had already directed the contract to the truck company, not before.

An Ethical Cloud

These cases are especially problematic given the limited ability of other branches of government to hold Supreme Court justices in check. They have lifetime appointments except under extremely limited circumstances and can be removed from office only through impeachment by the House of Representatives and conviction by the Senate, which is functionally impossible in recent years.

Supreme Court Justices are the only members of the federal judiciary not covered by a binding code of conduct or subject to the complaint and discipline

requirements that apply to other federal judges under the Judicial Conduct and Disability Act of 1980.

While the Justices are, in theory, subject to statutory requirements regarding financial disclosures and recusal over a conflict of interest, there continues to be questionable conduct and refusals to recuse themselves during clear conflicts. For instance, Justice Alito's wife flew “Stop the Steal” flags on their property prior to the 2021 inauguration, but he claimed that because they were his wife's flags, he was not obligated to recuse himself since he had not personally flown them. Similarly, Justice Thomas remained silent regarding his wife's clear involvement in efforts to prevent Biden from taking office.

A court that answers to no one, that is unwilling or unable to acknowledge the radical politically-motivated approaches they have taken and that could only be kept somewhat in check by a unified majority in the House and Senate poses a grave threat—not just to our individual freedoms, but to the integrity of the United States legal system itself.

The Power of Your Vote

All of this means that it's more important than ever to vote this November. The future of the Supreme Court and any chance escaping a far-right, anti-public education supermajority depends on your vote for President.

If you want to see a Supreme Court that will protect voting, civil, reproductive and labor rights, then it is vital to elect a president who will nominate judges who will safeguard these rights, and elect members of Congress willing to hold justices accountable. By 2025, four of the nine Supreme Court justices will be over 70 years old. The next President may get to nominate as many as four new justices, which will shape the trajectory of the Court for the next generation. We cannot afford to let the highest court in our nation continue to undermine the rule of law, civil liberties and effective functioning of government.

Political Action Committee Refund Request

Thousands of members of Education Minnesota decide to contribute to the union's political action committee. The PAC is one of our main tools to bring the educator voice to the policy debate by electing people who will listen. Those PAC dollars go back to local unions to help them win school board and levy elections, as well as support pro-public education candidates at the state and national level.

In accordance with Education Minnesota Bylaw Article 2, Section 3, Subd. b, I hereby request the following:

_____ Please refund to me \$25 of my Education Minnesota's dues that will be contributed to the general account of Education Minnesota Political Action Committee for the 2024-25 academic year.

Non-U.S. citizens should request this refund.

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING FIELDS ARE REQUIRED. PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY.

Name: _____

Last 4 digits of SS#: _____

Email address: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Local/Affiliate: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A request for refund of the Education Minnesota Political Action Committee contribution will not affect membership rights or benefits. Retired members are not assessed, thus do not qualify for the refund.

DEADLINE FOR REFUNDS:

Refund requests MUST be received by the Education Minnesota Political Action fund:

- 1) By Oct. 31 for continuing members; or
- 2) Within 30 days of signing a membership application for new members.

Checks will not be mailed until the end of November, after all forms have been processed.

ORIGINAL SIGNATURE NEEDED.

Return this form to:
 Education Minnesota Accounting Department
 Attn: Refund Request
 41 Sherburne Ave.
 St. Paul, MN 55103-2196

Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Refund Request

Contributions to this foundation will provide financial support for innovative programs initiated by Education Minnesota members, locals and affiliates that promote educational access for learners and excellence in teaching. Grants also support professional development for education support professionals and higher education faculty.

In accordance with Education Minnesota Bylaw Article 2, Section 3, Subd. c, I hereby request the following:

_____ Please refund to me my \$5 foundation assessment that would be contributed to the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning for the 2024-25 academic year.

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING FIELDS ARE REQUIRED. PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY.

Name: _____

Last 4 digits of SS#: _____

Email address: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Local/Affiliate: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A request for refund of the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning assessment will not affect Education Minnesota membership rights or benefits but will make you ineligible to receive a grant from this foundation. Retired members are not assessed, thus do not qualify for the refund.

DEADLINE FOR REFUNDS:

Refund requests must be received by the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning:

- 1) By Oct. 31 for continuing members; or
- 2) Within 30 days of signing a membership application for new members.

Checks will not be mailed until the end of November, after all forms have been processed.

ORIGINAL SIGNATURE NEEDED.

Return this form to:
 Education Minnesota Accounting Department
 Attn: Refund Request
 41 Sherburne Ave.
 St. Paul, MN 55103-2196



NEA Member^{*} Exclusive

A Trusted and Valuable Benefit

As an NEA member, did you know you receive \$1,000 of term life insurance at **no cost** to you? You're already enrolled in the NEA[®] Complimentary Life Insurance Plan, but it's a good time to make sure you've selected a beneficiary.

When you do, you can have some peace of mind that your loved ones will receive their benefit in a time of need. This unique benefit helps ensure educators like you have additional coverage beyond what may be provided through your district. It's just one of the many ways your union membership works hard for you.

**Scan the code or go to
neamb.com/mycomp for a
quick and easy path to update
your beneficiary information.**





Education Minnesota
41 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55103

THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Come say hello at the Great Minnesota Get-Together!

Each year, Education Minnesota member volunteers and staff run a booth at the State Fair in the Education Building on Cosgrove Street near the Snelling Avenue entrance.

Volunteers working our booth produce personalized photo calendars for visitors—in 2023, members produced more than 15,000 calendars for fairgoers who stopped by! Volunteers also act as Education Minnesota ambassadors, answering questions about the importance of our union and the work we are doing to improve public education. Education Minnesota staff are also on hand to answer questions from visitors.

In addition to the calendar, the booth also features an area for visitors to leave a message for an educator who has impacted their lives. We will also highlight a different education group almost every day of the fair! These groups showcase their curriculum area or program, such as Teacher of the Year finalists, music educators and more.

The Minnesota State Fair begins Aug. 22 and runs until Sept. 2. Our booth will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day. We hope to see you there!