

M I N N E S O T A EDUCATOR

JUNE / JULY 2025

***Denise Specht steps down
after 12 years as Education
Minnesota president
RC delegates elect new officers***

***Linda Wallenberg is 2025
Minnesota Teacher of the Year***



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

Attend a 'When Can I Afford to Retire?' training

Education Minnesota ESI will be holding "When Can I Afford to Retire?" trainings this June and July. Regardless of how long you have been an educator, attending this seminar will help you understand how your pension, Social Security and other savings, such as a 403(b), all contribute to your financial and retirement plan. Register early as seating is limited at the in-person events.

Please note that there are separate sessions for members with TRA and PERA pensions. Please register accordingly.

June 2025 dates

Thursday, June 12 (Teacher)
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
EdMN Apple Valley Office
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

Tuesday, June 24 (Teacher)
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
Shoreview Community Center
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

Tuesday, June 24 (ESP)
(For members covered by a PERA pension plan)
Shoreview Community Center
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

June Virtual Seminar options

Tues., June 10
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
9 – 10 a.m. virtual seminar
The Zoom link will be emailed to you the day before the seminar.

Tues., June 10
(For members covered by a PERA pension plan)
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. virtual seminar
The Zoom link will be emailed to you the day before the seminar.

July 2025 dates

Tuesday, July 15 (Teacher)
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
EdMN Brooklyn Park Office
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

Thursday, July 24 (Teacher)
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

Thursday, July 24 (ESP)
(For members covered by a PERA pension plan)
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
9:30 – 10 a.m. Registration
10 – 11:30 a.m. Seminar/boxed lunch/prizes

July Virtual Seminar options

Thurs., July 10
(For members covered by a PERA pension plan)
9 – 10 a.m. virtual seminar
The Zoom link will be emailed to you the day before the seminar.

Thurs., July 10
(For members covered by a TRA pension plan)
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. virtual seminar
The Zoom link will be emailed to you the day before the seminar.

To register visit www.bit.ly/3GWslQC or
email Deb at deborah.skog@edmn.org

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**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

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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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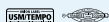


Table of contents

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Whatever
comes next, never underestimate
a union of educators.

page 2

Delegates elect new officers,
chart course for union work at
Representative Convention.

pages 4-6

Meet the 2025 Teacher of the
Year winner and finalists.

pages 7-8

As legislative session ends,
here's where things stand.

pages 9-10

Nominate a deserving colleague
for ESP of the Year.

page 11

Education Minnesota-St. Francis
fights back against book bans.

pages 12-13

Uncertainty at the U.S. Department of
Education and its impacts in Minnesota.

pages 14-16

An update on student loans from
the Degrees, Not Debt team.

pages 17-18

LEGAL BRIEF: Court of Appeals sides
with Education Minnesota member
with prior charter school service
in continuing contract dispute.

pages 19-20

Cover photo credit: Sarah Cooke

Whatever comes next, never underestimate a union of educators

Nevertheless, her union persisted.

That's how I would like future educators and unionists to look back on my time as president of Education Minnesota, a job I will step away from at the end of June.

When I was first elected 12 years ago, I was reminded that the winner of any elected office becomes a caretaker of an institution, with a duty to make it stronger before moving on.

With the help and support of dozens of members of our union's governing board, too many extraordinary local leaders to count, and five excellent officers, we've succeeded.

Acting in solidarity and guided by foundational values, Education Minnesota has shown resilience and courage in the face of a decade of adversity.

Hostile politicians in St. Paul and Washington, billionaire-funded think tanks, a biased U.S. Supreme Court and a global pandemic couldn't sink us.

Through it all, our union has been a progressive ecosystem that made Minnesota a blue dot in middle America, and our families and the environment are better for it.

Our union has blocked the worst of the school privatization movement and defended continuing contracts, collective bargaining and academic freedom.

We've helped pass laws to make students safe from bullies, teaching staffs more racially diverse, age-appropriate books more accessible and all-day kindergarten available.

Our work led to the passage of paid family and medical leave, a halt to captive audience meetings and an expansion of bargaining to include class sizes.

Our campaign program helped elect pro-education majorities in the Capitol in 2022, who made the biggest spending increase on public education in history in 2023.

Our union continues to add locals—48 since 2013—and I'm confident in the transition to President-Elect Monica Byron on July 1. Members will continue to be served.

Is there more to do? Yes. Pay for educators still lags similar professions. Health care costs are spiraling. As I write this, the Legislature is still working on pension reform.

The next leaders of our union will continue battling the big-money groups that want to destroy unions, privatize schools, silence workers and subvert democracy.

Ever since the *Janus* case at the Supreme Court in 2018, those groups have tried and failed every fall to persuade educators to leave their union. Now they're changing tactics and trying to move educators to create alternate unions with fewer services—and less social conscience.

Unionists believe every worker should make enough to live in dignity and provide for their families. But we also want a free society, where everyone is treated with respect.

My greatest worry as my term winds down is that too many educators have forgotten that lesson and are tempted to ignore the formula that sustained unions for a hundred years.

If labor only pursues compensation, workers will eventually live lives controlled by oligarchs. But if labor focuses only on social issues, we'll never get paid because it takes money to win justice in America.

Our union must always advocate for both, and continue delivering concrete results for members, wherever they are, through contracts, referendums, elections, budgets and legislation.

While I wish I could predict the next 12 years will be less eventful (and stressful) than the last, I can't, but I'll always bet on Education Minnesota to pull through.

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that you should never underestimate a public-school educator, especially when they're working...

Together,



 @DeniseSpecht



Congratulations to Devera Warner of Moorhead for being this month's contest winner!

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 the Minnesota Educator. Happy reading!

Devera Warner reads her Educator at the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles.





Educators in the news

“I believe teaching is...creating a sacred space where students can feel seen, believe in themselves, and trust their own authentic voices to take them out to the world.”

Minnesota Teacher of the Year Linda Wallenburg in a May 4 Fox 9 article titled, “Eden Prairie teacher wins 2025 Minnesota Teacher of the Year.”

Getting social!

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

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-  [@educationminnesota](https://www.instagram.com/educationminnesota)
-  [@educationMN](https://twitter.com/educationMN)
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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/Edina on Facebook:

-  facebook.com/edmnedina

Follow Elk River Education Association on Instagram:

-  [@erea728](https://www.instagram.com/erea728)

Education Minnesota elects new officers

In addition to union business at the Representative Convention, delegates elected a new officer team. Education Minnesota Vice President Monica Byron was elected after running unopposed for president. Marty Fridgen of United Teachers of South Washington County was elected vice president and Ryan Fiereck of Education Minnesota-St. Francis was elected secretary-treasurer.

The new officer slate will take office on July 1 and will serve three-year terms.

Monica Byron

Byron has served as Education Minnesota Vice President since 2022. She has also taught for 24 years in Richfield Public Schools, most recently serving as an elementary math coach.

"I'm honored and humbled to be elected president of Education Minnesota," Byron said. "This union has shaped my career, lifted my voice, and given me the opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with educators across the state."

Before she was elected vice president, Byron served for five years as an Education Minnesota Governing Board member and held many local union positions as a member of Education Richfield, including membership chair, treasurer and government relations chair. Byron is also a founding member of Education Minnesota's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee and the first Black person to serve as Education Minnesota's president.

Byron continued, "As president, I will strive to provide leadership that organizes with purpose, listens with intention and fights relentlessly for the priorities that matter most: fair pay, pension reform, quality health care and strong public schools for every student in Minnesota."

"I'm ready to do that work with all of you. We are stronger when we lead together. In union, we rise."

Marty Fridgen

Marty Fridgen is a music teacher currently serving as the president of United Teachers of South Washington



From left: Education Minnesota Vice President-elect Marty Fridgen, President-elect Monica Byron and Secretary-Treasurer-elect Ryan Fiereck at the 2025 RC.

County. She has taught for 27 years in both rural districts and in the metro area.

She has extensive leadership experience within Education Minnesota. She is a member of Education Minnesota's Governing Board, currently representing Election District N in the Metro. In past years, Fridgen has served as NEA Director, a member of the Education Minnesota Executive Committee, the Education Minnesota Budget and Finance Committee and as a member of the Pension Advisory Group.

"We must continue to protect and invest in public education," Fridgen said, "to ensure schools and campuses are places where educators are respected and empowered to educate students in safe and welcoming environments equipped with the necessary resources to thrive in classrooms and beyond."

Ryan Fiereck

Ryan Fiereck is a business education teacher currently serving as the president of Education Minnesota-St. Francis. He is in his nineteenth year of teaching and has three children who also attend public school in St. Francis.

In addition to serving as local president, Fiereck has served on the Education Minnesota Governing Board representing At-Large Zone 3 and as interim vice president when Bernie Burnham became the president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO. He has been a member

of the Education Minnesota Executive Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee and a co-chair of the Pension Advisory Group.

"I'm honored for the opportunity to support our members and leaders in this new leadership role. As a union family, we will face challenges ahead—but

I firmly believe we are ready to meet them together, with unity, integrity and transparency," Fiereck said.

A full introduction to the new officer team will be featured in the August/September issue of the Minnesota Educator.

Record number of delegates chart course for union work at Representative Convention

President Specht gives final address to the RC

On April 25-26, Education Minnesota hosted its annual Representative Convention in Bloomington. Delegates from across the state met to conduct union business, including discussion of action items that will guide the union's work for the next year.

There was a record-breaking nearly 800 participants in attendance at this year's convention. In addition to discussing and debating action items, the delegates also heard from state and national leaders and celebrated the Education Minnesota award recipients. NEA President Becky Pringle and AFT President Randi Weingarten both spoke to delegates at the Representative Convention, along with Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham. All three speakers emphasized the importance of solidarity for advocacy and building community among members.

During the convention, delegates discussed 16 action items. Eight passed, two failed, four were withdrawn, one was ruled out of order and another was sent to the Rules Committee. The approved action items direct Education Minnesota to:

- Support and encourage locals to take action that promotes and protects our union's principles or issues that matter to locals and their communities.
- Make achieving a statewide health insurance plan for all educators a top priority in 2025-2026 and continuing the work of the Health Care Task Force.
- Create a committee to research the financial impacts of post-secondary enrollment options, concurrent enrollment or online postsecondary courses on public schools and higher education institutions.

- Support the NEA's lawsuit against the Trump administration for attempting to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education.
- Develop a task force to investigate the investment of pension money into companies that violate human rights, civil liberties and more.
- Direct the Human Rights Committee to work with the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee and Education Minnesota Ethnic Forums to develop language for the Constitution and Bylaws that acknowledges the connection to stolen land of Indigenous people.
- Support educators working in Minnesota on J1/H1 and other types of visas.
- Establish and train a group of member rights advocates to provide culturally responsive assistance with union representation for members who request it.

Action items are directives to Education Minnesota that require a specific action and generally expire at the next Representative Convention.

Delegates also approved two changes to the Education Minnesota Constitution and Bylaws: one change cleans up language regarding at-large districts, and the other increases the voluntary contribution to the PAC by \$5, bringing the total to \$30 a year. This PAC contribution remains separate from dues and members can still request refunds at the end of the fiscal year.

Delegates also shared their support for Becker Education Association, which had been challenged by a competing union for sole representation rights. Educators in Becker voted on whether to remain part of Education Minnesota or whether to join a new

organization, the Becker Association of Professional Educators. Becker employees voted overwhelmingly to remain with BEA: 71% of voters chose to stay.

Education Minnesota also honored several awardees, including ESP of the Year Mark Bauch, Human Rights Award winner Kasey Wacker, We Are One Solidarity Award winners Education Minnesota Lakeville and Peterson-Schaubach Leadership Award winner Denise Specht.

The Human Rights Award honors a member who uses their advocacy to advance human and civil rights. This year's winner, Perham teacher Kasey Wacker, created a program in her district that uses public speaking classes and service-learning and community service projects to create a safe and equitable environment for all students in the Perham school district.

The We Are One Solidarity Award is given annually to an Education Minnesota local union or group of active members demonstrating outstanding or significant union leadership. This year's recipient was Education Minnesota Lakeville, whose organizing in 2023 and 2024 brought together thousands of community members and resulted in a 99% strike authorization vote that eventually led the school board to back down and negotiate with the local.

The Peterson-Schaubach Leadership Award honors a leader who has made outstanding contributions to Education Minnesota or its locals. This year's winner was President Denise Specht, who was honored for her twelve years as president, six years as secretary-treasurer and many years on the governing board before that.

In her acceptance speech, President Specht highlighted the union's successes over the years, including the successful block of a constitutional amendment that would instate right-to-work, navigating the aftermath

of the *Janus* decision, continually blocking voucher programs and plans to write standardized testing into the state constitution. She also highlighted policies passed by pro-public education lawmakers, such as linking education funding to inflation, unemployment insurance for education support professionals, paid family medical leave and more.

Specht encouraged delegates to uphold union values. "Minnesota educators valued advocacy for schools, improving their community and watching out for their pocketbooks," she said. "From our organization's start and through parts of three centuries, 'union values' have been a braided rope of solidarity, social justice and fair compensation. If anyone tells you a real labor union is only one strand, he is simply wrong."

Her address also warned against division taking root in the union. "Racism, sexism and elitism have always clung to the union movement, holding on like parasites in our guts – causing pain, making us sick. This is how Education Minnesota falls apart: when sadism replaces civility, bullying replaces respect, students are ignored. Without the power that comes from our moral authority as advocates for students and our communities, Education Minnesota's influence will fade."

She continued, "The future of Education Minnesota is more diverse by race, worksite and membership category – and that's okay. We should never stop organizing workers. Let's all see the racial diversity of our union and our new ESP members as a way to grow power."

Her address concluded with a call for solidarity. "For the past decade, I've signed all my columns and letters with a single word: together. Together is how we've succeeded and how our union will stay strong."

Specht, along with Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe, decided not to seek reelection, resulting in the election of a new slate of officers.

2025 Teacher of the Year Linda Wallenburg uses literature of the past to help students make sense of the present

Linda Wallenburg, Minnesota's 2025 Teacher of the Year, is in her 49th year of teaching at Eden Prairie High School. By some estimates, she's taught 12,000 students throughout her tenure in the classroom.

But what's striking about Wallenburg, or "Wally," as her students call her, is not the sheer longevity of her career—although that is remarkable. What sets her apart is that she brings as much energy and joy into her classroom as a first-year teacher would. To watch her cartwheel into the classroom, you'd never guess she'd been doing so for half a century.

"Wally continues to inspire her students and expand their opportunities through an artful blend of skill, compassion, and energy—embodying the very best of what it means to be an educator," said Joshua Swanson, superintendent of Eden Prairie Schools.

Wallenburg uses that energy to ensure her students not only develop a love of learning but understand how it will benefit them throughout their lives. Wallenburg, who teaches ninth-grade English and twelfth-grade AP literature, says the goal of education should go beyond simply acquiring knowledge. She says educators should prepare students for navigating failure, embracing the unexpected and learning to handle everyday life.

"Questions plague [my students]: 'How will I define success?' 'What is really out there for me?'" Wallenburg said in nomination materials for the award. "In my classroom, we try to navigate the ambiguity by engaging in activities to embrace it. We discuss how others, like Hamlet, Okonkwo, Gatsby, Plath, wrestled with these same universal questions and fears."

Sophia Yoerks, a former student, shared the story of a quilt square activity to demonstrate Wallenburg's passion and dedication. Yoerks explained that each AP literature student creates and decorates a quilt square at the beginning of the semester with their favorite quote. The squares are hung up in the classroom to create a quilt. "Most, if not all, of her lessons have



2025 Teacher of the Year Linda Wallenburg at the annual banquet to honor the finalists and awardees.

this same type of 'quilting' activity," Yoerks said. "Wally teaches her students how to intertwine education and passion. In doing so, every one of her classes creates a beautiful and diverse quilt together." Yoerks said that Wallenburg's class prepared her for college "more than any other class I took during my high school career."

Conn McCartan, former principal of Eden Prairie High School, was a student of Wallenburg's in her very first English class at Eden Prairie. A strong math and science student, he shared that he wasn't a fan of English classes until he took Wallenburg's class. "Linda turned me on to the writings of John Milton to the point where my senior paper was a critical commentary on *Paradise Lost*," he said in a nomination letter.

McCartan said that passion he experienced as a student still embodies Wallenburg's work today. "In a time when so many outstanding educators are choosing to leave the profession," he said, "here stands a 49-year master teacher who continues to pour herself into every lesson, who invests deeply in each of her students and whose passion...never waned."

As she accepted the award for Teacher of the Year, Wallenburg had some advice for her fellow educators. "We cannot surrender the classroom," she said. "Public schools are for all. Everyone is welcome at the table and we will fiercely protect those seats."

Eleven others nominated as Teacher of the Year finalists

Besides Linda Wallenburg, 11 others were selected as finalists. We asked them to share some reasons why they teach, which we have included below.



"I teach because education is the great equalizer. It's the ultimate act of social justice."

Stacy Bartlett, Stillwater Area High School, Stillwater Area Schools, biology, 10-12



"I teach because it's such a joy and a privilege to watch kids play and learn and grow. There's nothing else I'd rather do."

Zoe Kourajian, Edgewood Middle School, Mounds View Public Schools, U.S. history and girls' leadership, 7-8



"When a concept clicks for a seven-year-old, you see it in their whole body. That joy is contagious and it stays with you for a long time"

Katelyn Bruce, Lake Harriet Lower Campus, Minneapolis Public Schools, second grade



"Teaching is such a fun thing—every day is different and I love working with young people. I want them to know that life is meant to be lived and not to be worked"

Soren Olesen, Roseau High School, Roseau Community School District, welding, machine shop and work-based learning, 11-12



"I teach because I remember how education changed my life and I see how it changes the lives of my students."

Ben Cuevas-Rengstorf, Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis Public Schools, culinary arts, 9-12



"I believe education is the greatest weapon we have against injustice and those who seek to divide us. I teach because I believe teaching saves lives."

Sean Padden, Roseville Area Middle School, Roseville Area Schools, health, 8-12



"Every student should know that someone cares about them every day. Today could be the day that changes the direction of a student's life."

Christoph Dundas, Austin High School, Austin Public Schools, band, 9-12



"Every child deserves to feel seen, heard and valued. I am grateful for every opportunity to grow alongside my students."

Araceli Pastrana, Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion, Eden Prairie Schools, third grade



"I teach because it's woven into my life. I have a lot of students who haven't yet found their joy, and I can't wait to meet them!"

John Horton, J.J. Hill Montessori School, Saint Paul Public Schools, grades 1-3



"I teach because I am a part of my students' community. I want them to feel valued and important so that we can all experience more vibrancy in our community."

Kong Vang, Washington Technology Magnet School, Saint Paul Public Schools, ethnic studies, 9-12



"Teaching is a stepping stone towards liberation. Teaching some of our youngest learners means I have the chance to eliminate the opportunity gap before it even exists."

Amanda Jagdeo, Hamline Elementary School, Saint Paul Public Schools, pre-K

As legislative session comes to an end, here's where things stand

The 2025 legislative session continues to slowly move forward after an unprecedented start. In a typical year, the Legislature would adjourn as this publication goes to print. However, between the late start, a tied House and a razor-thin DFL majority in the Senate, this session has seen an unusual number of roadblocks and will go to special session if a deal is not reached by May 19.

We have provided an update of where things stand as we go to print in mid-May. We will provide more information in the next issue.

Budget disagreements

Since this is the first of a two-year legislative cycle, the Legislature's main goal is to pass a budget. The House and Senate both have very different approaches to the budget and have not yet been able to agree on all of the final bills. Because of the tied House, any policy passed requires bipartisan support.

The foundation of the disagreement was how to balance the budget. Even though the Legislature creates a budget every other year, that budget spans four years. House leadership's budget only balances the first two years; however, Senate leadership believes that the budget should be balanced over all four years, which led them to propose cuts to many programs. We have outlined some of those proposed cuts below. Because of these disagreements, the Legislature did not agree on budget targets until May 15.

H.F. 1582/S.F. 2000: Pension improvements

Our original pension bills, introduced in February, would implement three major changes to teacher pensions:

- Create an unreduced career rule of 60 years of age and 30 years of service.
- Reduce penalties in the 59-64 age range
- Remove delay on cost-of-living adjustments for Tier II educators who retire before their Normal



President Specht addresses members at the pensions day of action.

Retirement Age and increase the COLA for retirees from 1.2% to 1.5%.

The Legislature allocated \$80 million over the biennium for public pension money to be split between public safety and educators. That breaks down to \$20 million for teacher pension improvements a year, which is not enough to fund our original bills (S.F. 2000/H.F. 1582).

On May 16, the TRA Board presented a proposal to fund an enhanced 60/30 career rule for teachers. This proposal will have 97% parity with Rule of 90 for people retiring at age 60 and will be a higher benefit than Rule of 90 for anyone retiring at 61 or later. These improvements will be paid partially with state money, partially through a cost-of-living-adjustment delay and partially through TRA sufficiency funds.

The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement passed this bill on May 17, the Minnesota Senate passed the bill on May 18 and the House passed it on May 19. As we go to print, it heads to the Governor for signature.



Members pack the audience of the LCPR meeting on April 8.

Proposed cuts to unemployment insurance for hourly workers

In 2023, the Legislature passed a program allowing hourly school workers to apply for unemployment insurance over the summer. This is a much-needed program that has decreased turnover and increased flexibility and stability for education support professionals, who remain some of the most underpaid employees in public education.

The program has received significant pushback from school district leaders, who argue that it's too expensive to operate in the long term, and certain legislators that do not see the benefits of this program and view it as an unnecessary expense.

Earlier this session, House leadership reached a budget agreement that would have repealed unemployment insurance for hourly workers after four years, ostensibly to help "balance the budget." However, many members of the DFL caucus disagreed and refused to vote for it.

As we go to print, a bill is headed to the governor's desk to fund UI for this summer and next. While this is a major victory, the fight will continue because repealing UI is a major Republican priority.

Education funding linked to inflation

Another 2023 win provided automatic inflation adjustments to the general education funding formula. This critical win gives educators increased bargaining

power to negotiate for better pay and health care. As we go to print, the Senate's budget contains a proposal to remove this inflation link from the base formula. With looming federal budget cuts, unlinking inflation from the base formula would be catastrophic for our members at the bargaining table.

Education Minnesota members will continue fighting to protect this win up until the legislature adjourns.

Paid Family Medical Leave

The Paid Family Medical Leave Act, which provides eligible employees with 12 weeks of paid family or medical leave each year, is set to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2026.

In February, House Republicans introduced a bill that would repeal the program entirely. However, that bill saw no movement this session and remains in committee. Another February bill would have delayed implementation of PFML by one year, but House Republicans tabled it because with no DFL support, there were not enough votes to pass it. As we go to print, changes to PFML have not been reconsidered—but nothing is final until the Legislature adjourns.

We will continue to provide updates as budget negotiations move forward. To stay up to date on what's happening at the Legislature, check out our website, social media channels and subscribe to our Capitol Connections newsletter.

Nominate a deserving colleague for ESP of the Year

Nominations open June 1

Do you know an ESP who deserves to be recognized for their exemplary work? Nominate them for Education Minnesota's 2025-26 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, 2022, are eligible!

The ESP of the Year represents Minnesota ESPs throughout the profession 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.

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.

Nominations will remain open until mid-September. 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.

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

Education Minnesota-St. Francis empowers parents, students, community to fight back against book bans

In 2024, the Minnesota Legislature passed a “ban on book bans”—a law preventing the removal or restriction of books “based solely on its viewpoint or the messages, ideas, or opinions it conveys.”

Yet in the St. Francis High School library, a cart laden with copies of “The Kite Runner” sat in the corner with a sign taped to it advising students that the books were “no longer part of our collection and cannot be checked out.”

The reason? A controversial and likely illegal school board policy passed last November.

Under this policy, a book’s appropriateness is determined by its rating on a website called BookLooks, a community-run site affiliated with Moms for Liberty—the group spearheading censorship and book banning efforts across the country in recent years. Under the St. Francis policy, any book with a BookLooks rating of 3 or higher (on a 1-5 scale) must be removed from school libraries and classroom libraries, with no reconsideration or appeals process.

The BookLooks criteria disproportionately targets literature that features BIPOC characters, LGBTQ characters, or that contain what the site refers to as “inflammatory religious commentary,” giving these books higher scores. This includes classic and commonly studied texts such as “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison, “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” by Maya Angelou, “Night,” by Eli Wiesel and others.

Neither the individuals scoring the books nor the criteria used for their ratings are disclosed by BookLooks.

Education Minnesota-St. Francis President Ryan Fiereck explained that the main push for the policy came from several members of the school board who had lost their elections and were trying to pass this before they left office. “It was something they’d been trying to do for a long time, but it took a while to get their feet under them,” Fiereck said. Against the advice of their attorney, the school board passed the policy at one of their last meetings before the new members came in.

At that November meeting, board member Amy Kelly explicitly said that the goal of the policy was to align school libraries with her “red” beliefs—a clear violation of Minnesota state statute. While the 2024 law does allow for the removal of books based on “legitimate pedagogical concerns, including but not limited to the appropriateness for the library’s intended audience,” the school board member’s remarks made it clear that this policy was passed to ban books that did not align with a certain viewpoint, rather than because of pedagogical concerns.

Even when the new school board members took office, Fiereck said the board was relatively apathetic to the policy change, refusing to repeal it despite not agreeing with the policy. “This is what courts are for,” Fiereck said. “We gave them about three meetings to take action and when they didn’t, that’s when we decided to sue.”

The lawsuit filed by Education Minnesota-St. Francis asks for the books to be restored and for the policy to be overturned. The local’s goal is for the district to establish a proper process that allows for a conversation about which books belong in the classroom, with the ability for experts and community members to weigh in.

Education Minnesota-St. Francis had several meetings to lay the groundwork for the lawsuit to move swiftly. “Before the end of the year, we had emergency meetings and passed resolutions that gave me, as president, the power to use any means necessary to overturn the decision—up to and including a lawsuit,” Fiereck said. From there, he reached out to members with children in the district and asked for volunteers who would be willing to put their names on a lawsuit. Several leaders within the union stepped up, including their Member Rights Chair and two building stewards.

“There are some concerns about being targeted or that the community might come after you,” Fiereck said. “People were rightly worried about their safety. Fortunately, it hasn’t happened, but people didn’t want their kids to turn into pariahs and be targeted.”



Despite the fears of backlash and safety concerns, Fiereck said they've received strong community support. "A group of parents got involved in late January into February, and the leaders of that have done a phenomenal job of engaged parents who are frustrated that politics are being played with their kids," he said. "Even though many of them are probably conservative themselves, the idea that you can just remove these books is not something they support."

Those parents have created a coalition called Parents for the Freedom to Read, which has been very active at school board meetings and has taken up the mantle of pushing back against the book ban, with the union providing support. Because of the lawsuit, the EM-St. Francis members involved cannot speak publicly about the book ban, so Fiereck said it has helped to have a group to be the public face of fighting back.

St. Francis students have also gotten involved in the fight, organizing a walkout and addressing the school board repeatedly at meetings. "They're probably our best speakers and they've been pretty consistent," Fiereck said. "They've been pushing the conversation, talking about how important it is to have the tools [they need to succeed.]"

Fiereck said that the most effective arguments have been emphasizing the lack of local control and demonstrating that the union has the moral high ground.

He shared that one significant impact has been the toll this policy has taken on educator confidence. He

says there's an expectation that teachers' training and expertise is respected and that they are trusted to know what's best for their students, but these policies have a lot of educators second-guessing themselves and their expertise. He outlined an example where a community member attempted to target an early career educator for a book they were teaching. The community rallied around the educator and the post targeting that person was eventually taken down, but that didn't undo the damage that had already been done.

"Don't give them a reason to shop around for other jobs," he said, highlighting how these policies and the behavior they spark can worsen the educator shortage. "They're not here because they're getting paid the most—not only in education, but also in St. Francis."

Book bans like St. Francis' also negatively impact student performance. "When you're spending time worrying about whether this material is okay or that material is acceptable, you have less time to spend on preparing students" for things like standardized tests, said Fiereck. "How can you adequately prepare a student for a test if you can't [teach them with materials they're likely to see on the test?]"

Fiereck said the biggest takeaway from this experience is that opportunities for solidarity exist in all spaces. "It doesn't just have to happen in the big cities. Even in the reddest of areas, when we come together and work with the community, the parents are there when we ask them for support."

Federal actions regarding public education and their impacts in Minnesota

Since January, uncertainty has swirled around the U.S. Department of Education due to a series of chaotic executive orders and policies from the current presidential administration. As this issue heads to print, over two dozen executive orders, directives and policies have been issued by the administration. Almost all have faced legal challenges and many of these orders have been blocked by courts. In many states, these directives violate state law; as a result, some states have refused to comply.

Many of the administration's actions have either directly or indirectly impacted education. To help educators navigate the constant changes from the federal government, we have provided a breakdown of some of the most influential education-related executive orders and USDOE policies that have been enacted over the past few months.

DHS rescinds sensitive locations policy

What it is: This executive order rescinded a Biden-era policy banning Immigrations and Customs Enforcement from acting in “sensitive locations,” including hospitals, schools, universities and churches. The Biden-area policy was designed to protect access to basic services and ensure that immigrant children can safely attend school without worrying about being taken by ICE.

Impact in Minnesota: While we have not seen ICE raids at public schools, two university students have been taken by ICE and five others have had their visas revoked by DHS with no warning and no given cause.

Status: Still in effect.

Federal Funding Freeze

What it is: In January, the Trump administration announced that it would require all federal agencies to temporarily pause the disbursement of all funds and halt all spending until programs could be reviewed by the president to ensure they aligned with his agenda. This included vital funding for Title I programs, school lunches, health care and more.

Impact in Minnesota: Because the freeze was rescinded after only two days, we did not see negative fiscal impacts in our state because it was never implemented. However, the memo did create widespread panic and confusion at the state level, because Minnesota's E-12 schools receive \$1.1 billion in funding from the federal government, all of which would be in jeopardy if this memo had gone into effect.

Status: Temporarily blocked by courts and rescinded by the administration after widespread bipartisan backlash.

Executive order addressing “radical indoctrination in K-12 schooling”

What it is: This executive order attacks equity practices and programs that have been developed to address educational disparities and bring schools into compliance with civil rights laws. It directs the USDOE to create a plan to withhold funding from K-12 schools and programs that “promote anti-American, subversive, harmful and false ideologies.” However, it defines these ideologies broadly, including any teaching of racism or privilege in the definition – even in a historical context.

Another alarming component of the order directed the U.S. Attorney General to work with states to criminally prosecute educators who “violate the law by...unlawfully assisting the social transition of a minor student.” Social transition is defined as the adoption of a gender identity that differs from one's sex assigned at birth. This means that something as common as using a transgender student's preferred name and pronouns could subject an educator to liability.

Impact in Minnesota: This executive order directly violates the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Furthermore, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and several courts have ruled that these practices are required by law and the president has no authority to override state law or prosecute educators through executive order.

Status: Currently facing legal challenges.

Executive order establishing a federal voucher program

What it is: An executive order issued in January that directs the Department of Education to encourage states to give funding to private schools and encourages the DOE, the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services to begin including private schools in their grant programs.

Impact in Minnesota: The Minnesota Constitution prohibits the use of public funds on private and religious schools, and an executive order does not supersede the state constitution. However, Minnesota's refusal to comply may lead to disruptions to federal funding.

Status: Still in effect, but largely symbolic, since it only directed discretionary federal grants—which is not a large sum of money—to be available to private schools. The greater threat to future federal funding for public schools would be vouchers in the form of tax deductions for private school tuition payments within a federal tax and spending bill moving through Congress as this publication goes to print, but these would not affect state education funding.

Transgender athletes ban and investigation of Minnesota State High School League

What it is: A Feb. 5 executive order that reinterprets Title IX, which bans sex discrimination in schools, as prohibiting transgender girls from participating in sports that align with their gender identity instead of their sex assigned at birth. The executive order threatens to remove all federal funding from programs that do not comply.

Impact in Minnesota: This executive order directly violates the Minnesota Human Rights Act, which holds that transgender students have a right to participate in school athletics and use facilities consistent with their gender identity. This interpretation of the MHRA has been upheld by many courts.

On Feb. 13, the U.S. Department of Education opened an investigation into the Minnesota State High School League over their (lack of) compliance with the order.

Since 2015, the MSHSL has allowed transgender athletes to participate in sports that align with their gender identity.

On Feb. 20, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison released a formal legal opinion that this executive order does not supersede Minnesota state law and that complying with it would be a violation of the MHRA. On April 25, Ellison's office sued the Trump Administration on behalf of the state and asked a federal court to declare the ban unconstitutional and prevent the administration from enforcing it.

Status: Facing legal challenges. Currently, no decisions have been issued the MSHSL policy in transgender athletes still stands.

“Dear Colleague” letter, END DEI portal and proof of compliance

What they are: On Feb. 14, the acting assistant secretary of education issued a letter to schools and universities threatening loss of federal funding if they continued what it calls “impermissible DEI” activities. Using an incredibly broad interpretation of the 2023 Supreme Court decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (which held that federally-funded colleges and universities cannot use race as a factor in admissions), the letter argues that the SFFA ruling means that federal law prohibits public education institutions from using race as a factor in almost any context: “race-based decision making, in any form, remains impermissible.”

The DOE then created an “end DEI” online portal for people to report learning institutions that are allegedly engaging in “illegal discriminatory practices.” The DOE claims that it will use submissions to identify areas of investigation.

In April, the DOE sent out a request for state and local education leaders to certify that they had eliminated DEI programs, disguised as “compliance” with Title VI, which prevents racial discrimination in schools that receive federal funding.

Impact in Minnesota: If allowed to proceed, these measures would impact programs across the state that seek to eliminate race-based barriers to education,

along with cultural competency and other programs that are required by state statute.

The Minnesota Department of Education rejected the USDOE's request to certify compliance and challenged the federal DOE's authority to require certification as a condition to receive federal funds.

Status: Temporarily blocked. In March, the NEA and the ACLU filed a lawsuit against the letter, arguing that it is too vague to effectively follow, a violation of the First Amendment and a violation of the Administrative Procedures Act. The U.S. District Court of New Hampshire agreed with NEA and ACLU's argument and granted a preliminary injunction, which blocked the letter, the END DEI portal and the Title VI compliance directive. The injunction effectively stops the USDOE from enforcing any of these measures in a district with NEA members. Several states, including Minnesota, also took legal action to preemptively block these measures.

Linda McMahon confirmed as Secretary of Education, mass layoffs at USDOE and the “wind down” executive order

What they are: Linda McMahon was confirmed as Secretary of Education in February. McMahon, a co-founder of Worldwide Wrestling Entertainment, former Trump superPAC chairwoman and former administrator of the Small Business Administration, has no background in education and shared in her confirmation hearing that she agrees with the president's attempts to close the DOE, supports voucher expansion and supports folding important programs like Title I, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act and the Office of Civil Rights into other federal departments, such as Health and Human Services.

Shortly after her confirmation, the USDOE announced that they were laying off almost half their staff. In

addition to 600 employees who accepted voluntary resignations or retired, the department eliminated around 1,300 positions, mainly in the Federal Student Aid and civil rights divisions.

On March 20, the President signed an executive order directing Secretary McMahon to begin winding down the DOE and to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education” to “the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law.”

Impact in Minnesota: The biggest impact we anticipate is to funds from the federal government. Minnesota receives approx. \$1.1 billion in federal funding just for K-12 education programs, and closing the USDOE puts that money at risk. Staff reductions and further wind-down actions may make it harder for schools to access funds and continue federally-backed programs.

Status: Currently facing legal challenges. NEA is leading a lawsuit to stop the closure of the USDOE and restore the employees that have been let go.

More information

The Minnesota Management and Budget department has created a dashboard to track federal funding interruptions in the state, which you can access at mn.gov/mmb/budget/federal-investments/data-and-reporting/. This dashboard includes all federal funding and is not education-specific.

For education-specific funding breakdowns at the state level, NEA has a tracker on their website, which you can access at edmn.me/fundtracker.

For updates and ways to take action, check out the Action Center on our website and follow our social media channels.

An update on student loans from our Degrees, Not Debt team

by Andrea Cecconi, Emily Mateo, Linda Pfielsticker and Vanessa Pulkrabek

For the past four years, we've kept a spreadsheet updated with critical data as part of our work. Inside Education Minnesota, there is nothing special about a spreadsheet; we have hundreds of them tracking school finance information, legislative projections, student and staff data and more. But this one is special. This spreadsheet contains data from Education Minnesota members sharing the amount of loan forgiveness they earned from 2021 until 2025.

As of January 2025, we tracked \$5.1 million in student loan debt that was erased from hard-working public education workers through Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) in the four years of the Biden-Harris administration.

That number hasn't changed much since this January. Of the many crises triggered by the Trump Administration's USDOE staff cuts, the student loan crisis is one that Education Minnesota members felt immediately. We have already seen the negative impacts of barriers to income-driven repayment (IDR), removal of access to loan consolidation and the looming threat of default and wage garnishment for those struggling to pay their loans.

As stated in the previous article, the DOE office that took the largest hit from buyouts and layoffs was Federal Student Aid, responsible for coordinating the US government student loan operation—from initial borrowing to repayment to loan forgiveness and ombudsman support.

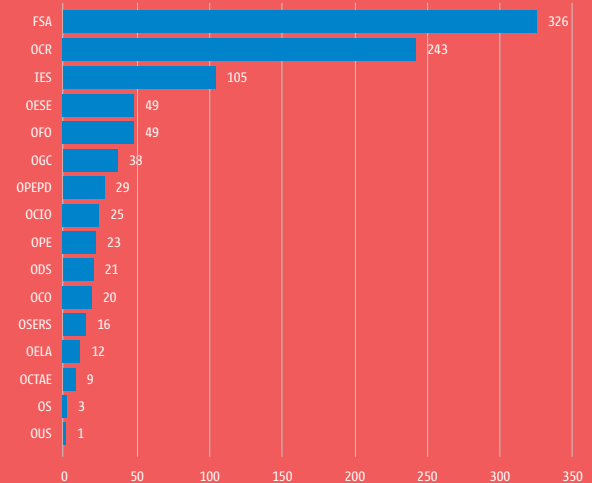
Education Minnesota members should be able to count on stable options to repay their loans and access the two programs for loan forgiveness that Congress passed into law. With the changes to DOE, that has not been the case. A few of the crises that borrowers have experienced since January:

Elimination of the SAVE plan

In 2024, nine Republican attorneys general sued USDOE over the launch of an affordable loan repayment

FSA, OCR AND IES hit hard in March 11 layoff

The data represents the 970 workers laid off on March 11, 2025, and excludes non-union workers.



plan. The SAVE plan is the most recent income-driven repayment plan created by Congress or the DOE, but IDR plans have been around for decades. In their lawsuit, the GOP AGs argued that the plan is too generous to borrowers and that the Department of Education lacks authority to create a plan with payments this low. For months, borrowers have been on hold in forbearances that were required while courts ruled. In February 2025, the new administration indicated that they would not continue to defend the affordable SAVE plan. The Degrees, Not Debt has gotten hundreds of calls and messages from borrowers attempting to repay their loans who have been stuck in limbo.

IDR plan application and changes

In February 2025, the DOE eliminated access to all IDR plans by removing the application from their website and secretly ordering student loan servicers to halt all IDR application processing. Borrowers in SAVE, those attempting to change plans or those wishing to enroll

for the first time have functionally been in limbo for months. Paying loans via an income-driven plan is also a requirement for those pursuing Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Without access to the IDR application, thousands of Education Minnesota members pursuing PSLF have been in limbo.

Consolidation application

At the same time IDR plan applications became unavailable, the online loan consolidation application was taken down by the new administration. Consolidation is a critical tool for borrowers needing to combine student debt, especially in pursuit of PSLF or to get out of default.

Resumption of wage garnishment for borrowers in default

The Trump Administration announced on April 21 that borrowers in default will have their loans referred to debt collection. Around 5.3 million borrowers are in default nationwide, and these borrowers' wages could be subject to garnishment. While borrowers can exit default via rehabilitation or consolidation of loans, the processes for doing this would be supported by staff who have been fired or laid off from the Department of Education.

Taken in isolation, each of these challenges is a lot for working people to deal with in an already confusing landscape. Taken together, these challenges represent a crisis for individuals and families when it comes to their budgets, their prospects for loan forgiveness and their long-term economic well-being.

Student loans are a necessity for virtually all educators who work in public schools. The investment that Education Minnesota members make in their own education benefits the students in our public schools and ultimately the whole state. Repaying that debt and earning the loan forgiveness to which they are legally entitled should not be impossible and USDOE should not be the barrier to either. As the challenges within our student loan system play out in the near future, our union will keep fighting to ensure that our members get the help and support to which they are entitled from their union, if not their federal government.

As a union, we work to pursue economic justice for members. This includes training, individual case work and large-scale advocacy. For student loan borrowers, this includes:

- **Lawsuits:** Education Minnesota members have joined our two national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, in lawsuits about the cuts to the Department of Education. So far, AFT's lawsuit resulted in the restoration of three IDR plans that the Trump administration cut and resumption of online access to the IDR and consolidation application. Borrowers who have not been able to access support from FSA staff are working with NEA to share their stories.
- **Training and communication:** As we learn more about the landscape for borrowers, we continue to share updates via email, social media and both in-person and online Degrees Not Debt training. We encourage folks to reach out to request training and to take our class via MEA Online!
- **Casework:** Members with questions about their loans—how to repay them, what options exist for loan forgiveness or how to navigate misinformation from loan servicers— have support. Emails to DND@edmn.org are assigned to one of the four staff members on our team and we will work with our members to answer their questions, create plans for loan forgiveness and get help with thornier challenges like exiting default.

Court of Appeals sides with Education Minnesota member with prior charter school service in continuing contract dispute

By Paula Johnston, Education Minnesota Attorney

On April 28, 2025, Minnesota Court of Appeals issued a great decision in *Bellamy v. ISD No. 700, Hermantown Public Schools*. The case concerned a 2023 amendment to a continuing contract law which includes previous teaching experience in charter schools and other states when determining the probationary period. The amendment states that:

"[n]otwithstanding any law to the contrary, a teacher who has taught for three consecutive years in a single school district or single charter school in Minnesota or another state must serve a probationary period of no longer than one year in a Minnesota school district." The Legislature stated that the amendment applied to "collective bargaining agreements effective July 1, 2023."

While the amendment benefits all teachers, it was part of a larger package of legislative amendments aimed at recruiting and retaining more educators of color to reflect the growing diversity of Minnesota's student population. By crediting experience in charter schools and schools in other states, which have comparatively higher percentages of educators of color, the 2023 amendment gave educators with these prior experiences the same employment rights as educators with three consecutive years in Minnesota public schools.

In *Bellamy*, our client had been a speech-language pathologist for more than five consecutive years in a Minnesota charter school before she was hired by the Hermantown school district for the 2022-23 school year. She was a zealous advocate for her students and worked hard to ensure that special education standards were being met in the district. However, the district non-renewed her in June 2024 after her second year with the district.

Education Minnesota appealed the district's purported non-renewal of our client's employment contract to the

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

Minnesota Court of Appeals. A central issue in the case was when the legislative change took effect. The court agreed with our argument that the amendment to 122A.40 was effective on July 1, 2023, and not on the date of the contract ratification the following February, as argued by the district. The court found that the amendment's effective date is "unambiguously stated" for collective bargaining agreements effective July 1, 2023, and thereafter, and that the school district had a collective bargaining agreement with its teachers effective on July 1, 2023. It went on to state that "[a]s the school district concedes, Minnesota law provides that the prior collective bargaining agreement remains in effect during negotiations," and that the 2023-25 collective bargaining agreement that was finalized in February 2024 "expressly provides that it was effective as of July 1, 2023, since the contract ratification was retroactive to July 1."

The court also agreed that because our client had completed both requirements of the amendment's new language – 1. teaching for three consecutive years in a single school district or single charter school in Minnesota or another state and 2. completing a probationary period of no longer than one year in a Minnesota school district – she attained continuing contract status on July 1, 2023. The court rejected the district's argument that the one-year probationary term must be served after the effective date of the amendment. Education Minnesota successfully argued that the district's argument would, in fact, require a probationary period of longer than one year.

Finally, the court agreed that granting our client continuing contract status on July 1, 2023, did not result in a retroactive application of the statute. There is a presumption in the law that statutes do not apply retroactively unless the Legislature clearly states otherwise. In this case, however, the amendment affected the school district's right not to renew Bellamy's contract in 2024, after the effective date of the amendment.

Because our client had more than three consecutive years of teaching experience at a charter school and served a probationary period in the district from 2022-23, she already had a continuing contract effective July 1, 2023, and as a result, the district's attempt to non-renew her in June of 2024 was invalid. Bellamy herself credits "the unwavering support of Education Minnesota and the incredible efforts of our local union president (Katie Marciniak)" for the outcome in this case.

What this decision means for other members:

- This decision makes clear that the law's effective date does not require the out-of-state or charter school service or the one-year probationary period to have occurred after July 1, 2023, contrary to what some districts have argued.
- Licensed educators with at least three previous years of consecutive out-of-state or charter school teaching experience who served a probationary period in a Minnesota school district in 2022-23 or 2023-24 without being non-renewed have continuing contract status and cannot be non-renewed this school year.
- Licensed educators with at least three previous years of consecutive out-of-state or charter school teaching experience who began teaching in the 2024-2025 school year (and teach at least 90 days during the year), and are not non-renewed prior to July 1, 2025, will attain continuing contract status on July 1, 2025.
- If you or a member you know are currently in your second or third year in a district and have been non-renewed in the past 60 calendar days despite having the requisite out-of-state or charter school experience, please contact your Education

Minnesota field staff as soon as possible so we can help protect their rights.

As a benefit of membership, Education Minnesota's legal department provides individual legal representation, when needed. In cases of individual statutory rights, such as continuing contract rights, we represent the individual member instead of the local – although the local supported Ms. Bellamy in this case. This differs from contract grievance cases, where we represent the local union challenging the contract violation, even if the grievance currently only affects one person.

Members who believe they need legal representation in an individual rights issue should reach out to their local president or field staff to discuss setting up a legal consultation. For Education Minnesota to provide individual legal representation, the case must meet the requirements of our legal services policy and the person seeking assistance must be an active member at the time the need for representation arises.

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Join us at the Great Minnesota Get-Together!

Registration to volunteer at the State Fair is open!

Each year, Education Minnesota member volunteers and staff produce personalized calendars for fairgoers in the Education Building during the State Fair. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about public education and share your story with attendees.

Shift duties include taking pictures and printing calendars for attendees, managing the “Thank a Teacher” notecards and acting as an Education Minnesota ambassador for fairgoers. In 2024, members produced more than 13,000 calendars.

In addition to the calendar, the booth also features a different education group showcasing their curriculum area or program each day. Past participants include Minnesota Teacher of the Year, School Nurse Organization of Minnesota and more.

Volunteers receive a free ticket for admission to the State Fair, an Education Minnesota T-shirt and will be reimbursed for mileage. Volunteers will also be reimbursed for parking, bus fare or rideshare costs up to \$20 (with original receipts). Shifts are three hours.

To sign up, please visit educationminnesota.org/events/annual-events/state-fair-booth.