

# LABOR NEWS

## Union Update

### AFL-CIO and NEA Announce National Partnership

Groundbreaking deal allows NEA locals to become AFL-CIO affiliates for first time.

The National Education Association and the AFL-CIO have announced a partnership that will allow local affiliates of both organizations to work together to meet the needs of working families. The agreement brings together the largest independent U.S. union, representing 2.8 million teachers and education support professionals, with a federation of unions representing 9 million workers.

"In this political climate, our organizations need to build on our common goals and advocate together for our members and our children," says Reg Weaver, president of the NEA. "Our unions, like our public schools, are fixtures of local communities. Through joint activities, we can better strengthen our communities, our public schools, and our organizations."

The NEA and the AFL-CIO will remain independent organizations. For the first time, though, NEA locals may become affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The locals must apply through the NEA and, once approved, may participate in the AFL-CIO's community labor councils.

NEA affiliates have previously worked with the AFL-CIO locally, but AFL-CIO policy has prohibited the affiliates from joining the AFL-CIO. This agreement, which both the AFL-CIO executive council and the NEA have recently approved, allows



National Education Association President Reg Weaver, left, and AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney shake hands as a partnership between the two organizations is announced, bringing together the largest independent U.S. union, representing 2.8 million teachers and education support professionals, with the federation of unions representing 9 million workers.

the affiliates to join the Federation.

"By giving NEA local members the opportunity to unite with our members, we'll be able to wage stronger campaigns to help working families fend off escalating assaults on family incomes, education, health care, pensions, and public services," says AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney. "And we'll be stronger in the fight for quality, affordable health care for all, retirement security, and a great education for our children."

Affiliates will collaborate on common local goals, such as increasing parental involvement in public schools and protecting members' rights. Both organizations have noted that students benefit when their parents earn living wages and have health benefits for their children.

This isn't the first time that the two organizations have come together.

The NEA frequently works with the AFL-CIO to analyze federal and local policy on issues like health care. The two organizations have collaborated on proposed Medicare reform legislation.

More than 220,000 NEA members are already affiliated with the AFL-CIO through local and state joint affiliations with the American Federation of Teachers, an AFL-CIO affiliate, which has expressed its support for the labor solidarity agreement.

The NEA has also worked with the AFL-CIO's Center for Working Capital to educate members on pension issues, and the AFL-CIO has participated in the NEA's retirement and benefits forum.

Currently, the NEA is working with other unions to coordinate a national strategy to protect defined-benefit pension plans. ●