The NEA Shows Its Politics

by Phyllis Schlafly

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Political conversation on the media is full of chatter about how to cut spending and debt, but it reminds us of the comment attributed to Mark Twain: Everybody talks about the weather but nobody does anything about it. There's a lot of talk about how to cut back on entitlements, but why doesn't somebody suggest cutting the extravagant federal dollars spent on education, which is not even an entitlement?

The billions spent on education have not achieved any of their designated goals, which were to raise the test scores and to close the gap between kids from upper-income and lower-income families. The handouts, however, produced a lot of cheating by teachers and administrators trying to hide their failure to achieve designated goals.

We hear about increasing the role of the states in other areas such as Medicaid. But the most important area where the states should have primary responsibility is education.

The most powerful union of government employees is the National Education Association (NEA), which held this year's annual national convention as usual over the Fourth of July weekend, attracting 9,000 delegates. To no one's surprise, it resembled a re-election campaign rally for Barack Obama, with the pressure on delegates to identify themselves as EFO (Educators for Obama).

Many delegates wore Obama campaign buttons and T-shirts and sported banners with messages such as "You are our knight in shining armor." The official NEA newspaper, called "RA Today" and published every day during the week-long convention, featured a very political full-page endorsement of Obama headlined "Do your part and pledge to be an educator for Obama today!"

In preparation for the convention, NEA leaders had been urging their members to hold house parties to teach their friends why Obama deserves their votes. House parties were one of the successful tactics Obama used to win his election in 2008.

The NEA convention passed its usual scores of anti-parent, anti-school-choice, pro-feminist, pro-homosexual resolutions that morph into the NEA's Legislative Program. This authorizes the highly-paid NEA staff to lobby Congress, state legislatures, education departments, and school boards to adopt NEA policies.

One significant new resolution adopted this year reads: "The Association also believes that members have the right to have payroll deduction of both Association membership dues and voluntary political contributions." That should make it clear that the way to cut the NEA's political power is for state legislatures to pass Paycheck Protection laws that prohibit the racket of state governments deducting political contributions out of the paychecks of teachers and turning the money over to the NEA bosses to elect Democrats.

We can get a look at NEA's political clout by reading a Memorandum distributed to the delegates by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. It reveals the amount of money available in the NEA Ballot Measures/Legislative Crises Fund in the current year, beginning with $1,563,775, and projecting $26,939,129 by the end of the year.

Already this year, the NEA powers-that-be have approved $270,000 to four state affiliates to use in ballot measure campaigns, $7,163,492 in assistance to 17 state affiliates for legislative battles, and $2,500,000 for lobby-campaign efforts related to the congressional reauthorization of federal education appropriations.

Another Memo Van Roekel distributed to delegates gave detailed information about the NEA Media Campaign Fund for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. These two funds are supported by a special dues assessment on every NEA member.

The NEA state affiliates that received NEA money from this Media Fund during the current year include: NEA Alaska $75,000, Delaware State Education Association $43,500, Florida Education Association $135,000, Idaho Education Association, $115,000, Illinois Education Association $400,000, Michigan Education Association $308,000, Education Minnesota $125,000, South Carolina Education Association $70,0000, Utah Education Association $105,000, Vermont NEA $108,500, and West Virginia Education Association $35,000.

The NEA's official Legislative Program includes many items that implement radical liberal ideology but have nothing to do with educating students. This column isn't long enough to list the 31 pages of fine print detailing the NEA's legislative demands, so I'll just mention a few to give you the flavor.

To nobody's surprise, the NEA supports "national health care that will mandate universal coverage." The NEA supports a long list of United Nations treaties, all of which would limit U.S. sovereignty and meddle in our domestic laws and customs.

The NEA supports adding the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would mandate "equality of rights … on account of sex." To reinforce that goal, the NEA supports passage of a federal statute to assure "sexual orientation" rights.

The NEA supports "confirmation of Supreme Court Justices and federal judges who support civil rights." According to the NEA, "civil rights" includes both "reproductive freedom" and "prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expression."