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Representing Public School Employees in the Communities of
Cudahy • Franklin • Greendale • Greenfield • Oak Creek • St. Francis • South Milwaukee

Why is the State Assembly So Bad and Why Should We Care?

Did you know that if Governor Doyle and the current State Senate had their way, the QEO would no longer exist? Did you know that the current Senate majority in Madison passed significant improvements in school funding, and health care reform that would save our school districts millions of dollars and protect the quality benefits we currently have?

It may sound far fetched, but all of this would likely come to pass if not for the current majority in the State Assembly. Led by Assembly Leader, **Mike Huebsch**, and backed by Assembly members like **Mark Honadel** and **Jeff Stone**, the current Assembly majority has insisted on continuing the QEO, refused to meaningfully address the health care crisis, voted to slash educational spending, and tried to tighten the already vice like grip of revenue caps on our school districts' ability to raise resources for educating our kids.

Reforming our completely unjust and unworkable system of funding schools is nothing but idle fantasy with the current Assembly majority in place.

But this election season, up to 13 Assembly seats are being vigorously contested and could be won either by pro-education candidates or by back benchers of the current majority. A change of even three seats could unseat the current majority.

The time to make our shared goals of adequate funding for schools and fair treatment of all educational staff could finally be at hand. Please look for communications in coming weeks and months (yes, even during the summer) for how you can be part of making it happen.

Who Supports Health Care for Children and Families

One of our core values as educators is our belief that children need to be healthy in order to learn. And well established research proves that children can be healthy only if they have access to quality health insurance.

That's why it is so important that we elect political leaders who truly support health care coverage for children and their families. One federal program that has been very successful in reaching this goal is the State Children's Health Insurance Program or SCHIP. In Wisconsin, SCHIP funds are being used to support the BadgerCare Plus program, which makes coverage available to all the state's uninsured children and thousands of uninsured adults.

Among the candidates for president, **John McCain** does not support SCHIP. **Barack Obama** and **Hillary Clinton** are strong supporters of the program.

In 2007, McCain voted against the reauthorization of the program. Not only did he oppose the bill in the Senate, but when President Bush vetoed the legislation, McCain said the president "made the right call" and called the program an "unfunded liability like the Medicare prescription drug program." (H.R. 976, Senate Roll Call Vote 307, August 2, 2007). For his opposition to SCHIP and other programs that serve children, the Children's Defense Fund rated McCain among the worst senators in Congress.

Among area Representatives in the U.S. Congress, **Gwen Moore** is a strong supporter of SCHIP, while **Paul Ryan** and **James Sensenbrenner** have repeatedly voted to uphold George Bush's vetoes of the program.



Last year, in Maryland, a little boy died because of lack of dental care. Tragedies such as this happen all over our country despite our overall wealth. We can and we must do better.

In November, we will have a voice. It is our right and our responsibility to vote for the candidate whose values reflect our own. Should we vote for candidates unwilling to fund a successful children’s health insurance program? We think the answer is clear.

What Will We Do?

Many of the nagging problems we experience at work are a direct result of public policy failures – No Child Left Behind, inadequate school funding, lack of affordable health insurance for many, the QEO, just to name a few. On May 13, approximately 50 Council #10 members from many locals attended a meeting to assess what problems we think are worth acting on and what we believe Council #10 members would do about them.

The diverse program began with a presentation from State Assembly Representative, **John Richards**, and **Robert Kraig** of Citizen Action on reforming our broken health care system. Health care costs have nearly doubled since 2000, eating up pay raises for teachers and making it nearly impossible to win improvements for education support professionals who lack access to health insurance. According to the federal government, health insurance costs are expected to double within the next nine years, virtually guaranteeing that our existing benefits will continue to come under attack in the State Legislature and at the bargaining table.

Richards and Kraig argued that Healthy Wisconsin, the comprehensive health care reform passed by the State Senate last year, would guarantee quality, affordable health insurance for all Wisconsin residents while saving our school districts millions of dollars and protecting the quality benefits that most of our members have.

Following the discussion of health care, members engaged in a planning process led by WEAC Collective Bargaining Director, **D.J. Hollub**, WEAC Government Relations Director, **Bob Burke**, and WEAC Treasurer, **Betsy Kippers**. Members discussed what they viewed as the most pressing problems related to funding for schools, availability of health insurance and professional development. We then brainstormed ideas to engage our fellow members in concrete actions to create the change necessary to address the problems. The session facilitators will follow up with a report on our ideas for action and the concrete assistance we need from WEAC to be successful.

How the Candidates Compare on No Child Left Behind

Hillary Clinton	John McCain	Barack Obama
<p>“I will end the unfunded mandate known as No Child Left Behind. And, together we will come up with a 21st century educational system for our children, where we look at each individual child and try to decide what we need to do to lift that little boy or girl to his or her God-given potential” (Washington Post, 2/12/08).</p>	<p>“No-Child Left Behind – everybody likes to criticize it. It needs to be fixed, but it was a great beginning. It was a great way of gauging performance” (PBS, “The Charlie Rose Show, 11/27/07). (Specifically, McCain states that NCLB should be fixed in the areas of testing students with disabilities and non-English speaking students, but should not be repealed.)</p>	<p>“Unfulfilled funding promises, inadequate implementation by the Department of Education, and shortcomings in the design of the law have limited its effectiveness... We have spent too much time preparing students for tests that do not provide any valuable, timely feedback on how to improve a student’s learning. Creativity has been drained from classrooms as too many teachers are forced to teach fill-in-the-bubble tests” (NEA 2008 Presidential Questionnaire).</p>

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