UNE
United Northeast Educators
An affiliate of WEAC & NEA

Magnifier

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TOP 10 REASONS TO REPEAL THE SEPTEMBER 1 SCHOOL START DATE LAW

Want to Change the September 1 School Start Date? Senate Bill 109, a bill to repeal the school start date, authored by Sen. John Lehman, D-Racine, and Rep. Sondy Pope-Roberts, D- Middleton, is now before the Wisconsin State Legislature. WEAC presented testimony to the Senate Education Committee in support of allowing local schools to set their own calendar based on the needs of the local school community.

Top-Ten Reasons to Repeal the September 1 School Start Date Law

Number 10: ***It's Good For Kids!***

Number 9: *Teachers take classes in the summer to improve their teaching and can't take some classes if school is in session until mid-June.*

Number 8: *The start date law limits teacher bargaining rights.*

Number 7: *High school and middle school students and coaches already start athletic practices and competition in August.*

Number 6: *Students are more eager to get back to school in late summer than eager to attend school well into June. Teachers know that a short school week or two before Labor Day is a good transition into fulltime school from summer vacation.*

Number 5: *Wisconsin students score better on nationally scheduled Advance Placement tests and International Baccalaureate tests if they have had more days of instruction, especially if uninterrupted by snow days.*

Number 4: *Wisconsin students score better on WKCE tests if they have had more days of instruction before the mid-October tests.*

Number 3: *It's better for kids and ESP hourly employees to have full school days rather than adding minutes to the school day to make up snow days.*

Number 2: *Local control—who better than local school boards and educators to know what the needs of local children are?*

*And the Number 1 reason to repeal the September start date law is…**It's Good For Kids!***

Can you think of more reasons? Contact your state legislators and let them know. You can go to the WEAC Cyberlobby in the Issues and Advocacy section of www.weac.org to do just that. Let the state legislators know that repealing the September 1 school start date is the right thing to do for students and public schools in Wisconsin.

Six Great Myths About American Health Care

In a recent column ("'Universal health care' won't improve anything," Jan. 12) Thomas Sowell ignored the obvious: America's current health care system doesn't work very well. And we spend about a seventh of the nation's economic output for this utterly mediocre performance.

The system needs reform. More than 40 million Americans have no health insurance. And two out of every five adults under age 65 are underinsured. If someone in this country gets hit by a bus, our high-end trauma care is second to none. But if you have cancer, need a transplant or suffer from a chronic disease such as diabetes or mental illness and your health insurance is lacking, you are out of luck.

We need to do better. Any discussion of how to improve the system without acknowledging that the current system is deeply flawed is really little more than ideological point scoring—not a serious debate. Sowell uses Canada to warn of the alleged dangers of government solutions to health care problems. What he fails to tell us is that Canada spends far less of its national income on health care and its citizens are far more satisfied with their system than we are with ours. And based on objective measures such as infant mortality and life expectancy, it produces better results.

Even Mr. Sowell's use of the term "government health care" is intended to confuse and distract us by invoking strong negative imagery. The truth is, our government health insurance programs work far better than we generally admit. As a private insurance company executive, who also ran Wisconsin's Medicaid program, I have considerable experience in both worlds. So let me counter Sowell's so called "myths" with what I think are the big myths about our health care system.

Myth 1: We have a private health insurance system now. We do not. Well over half of all medical bills in this country are already paid by Medicaid, Medicare, the Veterans Administration, and government employers. People are also paying for care out-of-pocket. So today, private insurance plans only pay about a third of the nation's health care bill. And even that is subsidized by government tax treatment.

Myth 2: Government health insurance is inefficient. The opposite is true. Medicare and Medicaid both have administrative costs below 5%. My nonprofit company, WEA Trust, runs at about 7%, which is excellent. Most for-profit carriers have administrative costs of 10-20%, which they need to compensate highly paid executives, sales people and agents, and provide dividends to stockholders. It is more than a little ironic that one of the most popular health plans in this country is Medicare—you guessed it, a government run health plan.

Myth 3: America has the best health care in the world. We may the best high-tech health care in the world but it is broadly accepted that even the patients in this country only get the care that medical science says they should about half the time. And, the tens of millions without insurance don't even get that. No wonder our health outcomes are the worst in the industrialized world.

Myth 4: National health insurance would lead to rationing. We already ration. Check your insurance plan and see what it will—or won't—cover. On the other hand, Medicare and Medicaid don't ration. In fact, one of the knocks against these government health care programs is that they're so much better than employer-sponsored plans. And don't think for a minute that the tens of millions of uninsured and underinsured aren't experiencing rationing.

Myth 5: Government shifts the cost of health care to others. The main reason Medicare and Medicaid don't pay more is we don't want to tax ourselves to pay the bill. So instead of an explicit tax, we have a hidden tax. Even so, the effect is grossly exaggerated. While government typically pays less, it would probably cost us all more if it weren't paying over half the total costs. The biggest cost shifting comes from the uninsured and underinsured. If everyone were insured there would be no uncompensated care.

Myth 6: Malpractice awards are the reason health care costs are soaring. This is spin. The reality is our system makes too many medical mistakes; and only a small fraction are ever taken to court. It is broadly believed that waste and inefficiency consume up to 20% of the nation's health care bill. The way to reduce the cost of malpractice awards is to clean up the system and reduce errors in the first place.

Until we acknowledge that our current system is broken and cut through the mythology, we can't have the rational discussion we need to fix it.
We need to do better. It is time.

Mark Moody, President, WEA Trust

Dinner with the Legislators Wrap Up

UNE, along with Bayland Educators and the Green Bay Education Association held a dinner with area Legislators on Monday, March 9, 2009 at the Comfort Suites in Green Bay. We sincerely thank the following legislators for attending:

- ✓ Representative Garey Bies, 1st AD
- ✓ Senator Robert Cowles, 2nd SD
- ✓ Craig Moser, District Director for Congressman Steve Kagen
- ✓ Senator Alan Lassee, 1st SD
- ✓ Representative Tom Nelson, 5th AD
- ✓ Representative Jim Soletski, 88th AD
- ✓ Representative Ted Zigmunt, 2nd AD

NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

May 3 - 9 is National Teacher Appreciation Week. May 5, 2009 is National Teacher Day. This year, the Wisconsin PTA and the Wisconsin School Public Relations Association will join WEAC in promoting the week-long celebration of educators who ensure that our great schools benefit everyone.

WEAC resources include:

- A poster created for potential use in school buildings and other public locations.
- Ideas for Teacher Appreciation Week activities.
- A public service announcement that will play on radio stations across the state during this week.

Please contact WEAC Media Relations at (800) 354-7816, extension 1109 to obtain WEAC resources. Visit the WEAC web site at http://www.weac.org and go to the Special Resources section to find the Teacher Appreciation Week resources available online.

Additional information and resources are also available on the National Education Association's web site at http://www/nea.org/teacherday/.

Financial Planning Sessions

WEAC Member Benefits Specialist, Bob Moeller, will be providing personal financial planning appointments for members at **GBEA** on **June 17 and 18, 2009**. Appointments are also available at the Madison WEAC office throughout the summer. This is a valuable, no-cost member service. To schedule an appointment, contact Diana Buchholz at 1-800-362-8034, Extension 253.

Union 101: Just Cause

One negative stereotype of Unions is that they "protect bad employees." **The fact is that Unions protect *all* employees.** This typically occurs through the negotiation of "just cause" or "good cause" protection from discipline and termination. All nonprobationary employees represented by **UNE** have such protections.

So, what constitutes "just cause?" One could easily define just cause as not just, i.e., because a supervisor doesn't like a person. Generally, there are seven factors that constitute just cause which the employer must meet in order to discipline or terminate an employee, including:

1. **Notice**—***Did the employer provide fore warning*** of the possible consequences of the employee's disciplinary conduct?
2. **Reasonable Rule**—***Was the Employer's rule reasonably related to the operation of their business*** or the performance the Employer may properly expect of the employee?
3. **Investigation**—***Did the Employer***, before disciplining the employee, ***make an effort to discover whether the employee did, in fact, violate a rule?***
4. **Fair Investigation**—***Was the Employer's investigation conducted fairly and objecttively?***
5. **Proof**—***Did the investigation produce "proof"*** that the employee was guilty as charged?
6. **Equal Treatment**—***Has the Employer applied its rules even-handedly to all employees?***
7. **Penalty**—***Was the degree of discipline*** ad ministered by the Employer ***reasonably related to the seriousness of the proven offense*** and the employee's past work record?

With a "just cause" standard, employee's have the assurance that they cannot be disciplined or terminated for arbitrary or illegitimate reasons. **Without just cause protection, employees can be terminated *"just because."***

UniServ Activity Calendar

Date		Time	Event	Place
April	24-26	—-	WEAC-RA	La Crosse Center, La Crosse
April	30	—-	WERC Annual Labor Relations Conf.	Madison
April	29	5:30 p.m.	ESP M&O CBC Meeting	Holiday Inn, Suring
May	11	5:30 p.m.	Bayland/UNE IPD Committee	1951West, Comfort Suites, GB
May	13	6:00 p.m.	UNE Board Meeting	UNE Office
May	18	5:30 p.m.	Bayland/UNE Legislative Committee	1951West, Comfort Suites, GB
May	19	5:30 p.m.	Bay Area Negotiators	TBD
May	20	5:30 p.m.	UNE RA	Comfort Suites, Green Bay
May	25	—-	Memorial Day	UNE Office Closed
May	26	5:30 p.m.	UNE-Retired Annual Meeting	Rivers Bend, Howard
May	27	5:30 p.m.	M&O EA CBC Meeting	Holiday Inn, Suring
May	27	5:30 p.m.	Bayland/UNE ESP CBC	UNE Office

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10 Behaviors for a Stronger Union

1. Conduct business democratically.
2. Communicate regularly.
3. Treat ALL members equally.
4. Be truthful with members.
5. Encourage member involvement.
6. Listen and value member input.
7. Make well-informed decisions.
8. Share contract information.

Mission Statement

UNE is an organization of public education employees who provide training and services to protect, improve, and enhance members rights and the professional and economic capabilities of its members, hence improving the quality of life of all its members.