



EBEA News Brief

from our

Government Relations Committee

East Brunswick Education Association

October 2017

Elections Matter! And Here's Why...

As EBEA members, we work hard to create and maintain a safe, nurturing, and just environment for our students and each other. That mission does not stop at the end of the school day, and it is up to us to fight to elect representatives who will act in the best interests of our students and our schools, as well as to honor the promises made to our members and to maintain the dignity of our profession. We have seen in recent years the harmful consequences of lost elections:

1. Chapter 78, the NJ Law that raised worker pension contributions even while the state has neglected to make its full payment, putting the fund on a path towards insolvency unless action is taken. It also required workers to pay towards their healthcare, significantly reducing our members' take home pay. Because our contribution is derived from the cost of the premium, and not from our salary, unchecked rising healthcare costs have resulted in members taking home less money year after year.
2. Over the last ten years, politicians in Trenton have raised the retirement age for new employees from 55 to 65, implementing a 5 tier system, instituted a less generous formula for calculating pensions, and eliminated the "early retirement" option for new hires, effectively forcing all workers to work until 65 or face steep penalties to their earned retirement benefits regardless of how long they have served.
3. Under the leadership of Governor Chris Christie and Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, NJ has had numerous credit downgrades that make it more expensive for the state to do its regular business. The combination of these damaging credit downgrades and billions of dollars wasted on fruitless tax breaks for big businesses has left our state's schools and our pension severely underfunded.
4. The appointment of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court is all but certain to deal a severe blow to working people with an adverse ruling expected in the upcoming Janus vs. ASCME case, that will allow "free-riders" to use union benefits without having to contribute their fair share, essentially stealing your dues money and weakening the power of unions nationally!

What can YOU do to stop the madness?

First, and foremost, it is important that everyone exercise their right to vote on November 7th. If you cannot make it to the polls on election day, you can still vote by mail. Applications for an absentee ballot must be RECEIVED (not postmarked) by October 31st. They can also be picked up in person from your County Clerk's office as late as the day before election day. For more information, go to <http://www.nj.gov/state/elections>. You can find out more about local candidates by going to the members only section of the NJEA website (njea.org). You can log in using your PIN on your membership card.

Second, it is important that you make sure that all your friends and family get out to vote as well, and that they are informed about how important this election is for everyone in this state, and especially our students and education professionals.

Third, **GET INVOLVED!** This is YOUR STATE, YOUR CAREER, and YOUR FUTURE! Whether it's a half hour of phone banking from home, canvassing for an afternoon, or even putting up a lawn sign, every little bit helps. Our strength as a union is in our solidarity and our ability to work together as one. Don't let other people make these important decisions for you!

HOW THIS ELECTION IMPACTS YOU IN PUBLIC EDUCATION!

It is imperative that we act now to change the direction of our state, the tenor of public discourse to one that treats everyone with respect, and help create a viable future for our students and ourselves. This election could mean the difference between having your pension when you retire or not! Even though our pensions are technically guaranteed, it is untested whether the courts would (or could) actually force a state to honor its pension obligations, especially if the state were in economic distress. Gov. Christie's 2nd in command and Gubernatorial candidate Kim Guadagno's solution is to end the pension system as we know it, instead forcing members into a 401k style plan where members' retirements would be unprotected from fluctuations in the stock market and where workers would have no guarantees that their contributions, made with ever dwindling resources, would be matched by the state. She has also proposed slashing public worker health benefits to help pay for the damage caused by their failed economic policies.

In contrast, Phil Murphy, who has been endorsed by the NJEA, has promised to work to **mitigate the damage** caused by Chapter 78, to work towards **fully funding** our pensions, to **end the use** of the PARCC or other high stakes tests as a component of teacher evaluation, and unlike Christie and Guadagno, to **adequately fund** NJ's schools in accordance with the law.

The choice for working people is clear. It is up to us to ensure that we have leaders who will do what's right for our students, our members, and all the residents of our state.

In addition to the Governor, our entire State Senate and Assembly is also up for election this year. Unless we work hard, we will be stuck with many of the same legislators who voted for Chapter 78 and who refused to give the people of New Jersey a chance to amend the State Constitution to put the stability of our members' retirement beyond the reach of future politicians through an amendment to guarantee full pension funding. Two years ago, NJEA members worked hard to unseat such a legislator, Assemblywoman Donna Simon in Legislative District 16. Largely through the time and effort of our members, that seat is now held by Andrew Zwicker, who has demonstrated over the past two years that he is an ally of our state's students and education professionals. Again faced with a hotly contested race, our help is needed so that Andrew and his running mates can continue to do what is right for NJ. Some of our EBEA members have already been busy canvassing and phone banking in LD 16 and there's still time for you to make a difference! You can go to: <http://tinyurl.com/nieaforld16> or [contact the Government Relations Committee to find out more](#)



NJEA PAC Endorsed Candidates <https://www.njea.org/njea-pac-endorses-97-candidates-legislature/>

Members for Murphy <https://www.njea.org/members-for-murphy/>

Visit the NJEA Action Center often to "have a say" on issues important to you!
<https://actioncenter.njea.org/>