



MEMORANDUM

TO: House Education Committee

FROM: Jeff Fannon, Executive Director, Vermont-NEA *JF*

DATE: January 16, 2019

SUBJECT: Background information about Vermont-NEA

Lobbyists you may see:

- President: Don Tinney (dtinney@vtnea.org)
- Executive Director: Jeff Fannon (jfannon@vtnea.org)
- Political Director: Colin Robinson (crobinson@vtnea.org)
- Communications Director: Darren Allen (dallen@vtnea.org)

Purpose and Priorities

Vermont-NEA wants all children to have an excellent education. Our purpose is to make sure our members have a satisfying work environment where they are acknowledged for the work they perform and where the work they perform helps students do their best.

Organization basics

- An affiliation of local Associations of educators (teachers and support staff) in almost all public school districts in Vermont (and more than 320 schools).
- Membership, including retired teachers and student teachers, comprises approximately 13,000 Vermont educators who belong to their local Association, Vermont-NEA, and the National Education Association.
- Structure: 20-member Board of Directors elected by membership (4 statewide Officers, 16 regional Directors) + Executive Director *ex officio*. 20 staff members almost entirely consisting of former teachers who train our members to bargain and administer their own collective bargaining agreements.
- Subject matter affiliates: Some 20 professional affiliation groups (such as teachers of math or English or special education) function as formal affiliates of the Association, and the Association sponsors about 20 other education organization projects and programs (such as the Scholars Bowl).
- An affiliate itself of the National Education Association.

An Affiliate of the National Education Association

Activities basics

- Organizing and developing strong local Associations (120)
- Collective bargaining and "contract administration" (120)
- Professional development (reaching > 2000 educators annually)
- Public policy advocacy

"Corporate" citizenship

- Importance of public education and of unions to a strong middle class
- Retirement:
 - ✓ 2010 agreement addressed 10% of FY 11 deficit AND >10% of FY 12 deficit AND so on ...
 - ✓ protecting security and dignity for a career of public service
- Health care reform:
 - ✓ VEHI: \$ millions in lower than otherwise health insurance cost each year since 1995
 - ✓ Stop shifting who pays but actually reduce what we pay and lower costs for all
 - ✓ Created (along with AARP Vermont) the Campaign for Health Care Security and Vermont-NEA has otherwise been a leader in health care reform for years
- Funding reform:
 - ✓ Property tax reform principles, including abolishing the property tax

Professional excellence

- Initiated the development of the Vermont Standards Board of Professional Educators—an independent body of teachers that oversees the teaching profession
- Created a professional development program that now has school districts seeking us out

As you know, our schools are the lifeblood of our local communities, treasured by residents who want the best for their children. We know you, too, share our belief in strong public schools. This year, we look forward to working with you as we find ways to make our schools even better for Vermont's future – our children and grandchildren.

We were heartened to hear Governor Scott talk about the importance of education to the state's economic future, and that's why we believe that maintaining strong, effective and responsive local public schools is vital to Vermont's prosperity now and for our children. Our legislative agenda is also geared to help students and our members. This year, we intend to focus our efforts on those policies that will make it easier for children to learn and educators to teach. Attached is a brief introduction of our legislative agenda, which are the issues important to our members.

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