

UNIONS AND TEACHERS: DIFFERENCES IN THE STATE OF THE NATION

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ABSTRACT

Union organizing targeting public teachers has resulted in the formation of some of the largest unions in the United States including the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Financial support provided by these unions to the Democratic Party indicates extensive political influence. In spite of the growth of public education unionism, many States continue to restrict collective bargaining for teachers through legislative actions especially in the South. Statements claiming union teachers hamper student performance while increasing costs are shown to be either untrue or too simplistic. A historical understanding of why some States restrict collective bargaining for teachers having nothing to do with performance and costs is presented. Texas, a State prohibiting collective bargaining for teachers, is discussed relative to how unions progress when restricted legislatively.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers have become one of the growth engines of organized labor. The largest labor organization in the United States is the National Education Association (NEA) with more than 2.5 million members.¹ The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) boasts membership in excess of 1 million.² The attraction of teachers to labor organizations suggests that this growth must be a nationwide phenomenon. Is this true, and if it is, how do individual states differ in their legislative response to this movement? This paper will discuss answers to these questions. Additionally, coverage on the influence of unions on teacher pay and student performance will be explored. A case study will be provided as a summary for this information highlighting the Milwaukee Public School system. Other topics related to teachers and unions will also be discussed. An overview of teacher union finances will be presented followed by some explanation of how unions influence politics with money. Also a brief perspective on teacher unions' position on private schools will be presented. Finally, Texas will be analyzed as a representative state in the South, both in terms of the legislative environment and how teacher organizations are prospering. As will be seen, not all states are created equal when it comes to collective bargaining for teachers.

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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¹ Charlene K. Haar, *Teacher Unions and Parent Involvement*, The Educational Policy Institute Series on Teacher Unions (visited Nov. 17, 2001) <<http://www.educationpolicy.org/EPIseries/parent-bklt.htm>>.

² American Federation of Teachers; A Union of Professionals (visited Nov. 17, 2001) <<http://www.aft.org/laborday/constituency.html>>.

Federal labor laws, including the Wagner Act, Taft-Hartley Act, and the Norris-LaGuardia Act, were passed originally applying only to private-sector employment. State employment was excluded because each state was viewed as a sovereign political entity not subject to Federal legislation.³ During the period from 1930 to 1960, when labor unions were experiencing huge gains in the private sector, little progress was being made in State employee unionization generally and for teachers specifically. The signing of Executive Order (EO) 10988 by President Kennedy in 1962 gave Federal employees collective bargaining rights. It additionally gave impetus to the issue of collective bargaining rights for State public employees. Prior to the signing of EO 10988, only Wisconsin allowed State employee collective bargaining rights.⁴

With the collective bargaining for State government employees and teachers gaining momentum, differences between states quickly developed. Industrialized northern states, with an extensive history of union growth in the private sector, tended to be accommodative in passing State legislation allowing collective bargaining for public employees in those States.⁵ Alternatively, States in the southern region did not participate in private sector union growth and consequently viewed unions with unfamiliarity and suspicion. This suspicion underscored actions by States in the South to inhibit legislation on collective bargaining for public employees. To understand why private sector union growth failed to gain a foothold in the South, and consequently led to an unfriendly union legislative environment for State government employees and teachers, one must take a historical perspective.

With history as a guide, it must be recalled that agricultural employees were exempted from Federal labor law that started with the Wagner Act of 1935. At that time, Democrats dominated Congressional seats of southern states. President Franklin D. Roosevelt needed his Democratic Party's Congressional support for passage of the pro-labor Wagner Act that he supported. People who were employed in the factories of Northeastern and Midwestern States politically supported northern Democratic Members of Congress. Consequently, these Congressional members supported the labor friendly Wagner Act. Southern Democratic Members of Congress relied on the support of wealthy southern landowners for votes and financial support. These landowners opposed collective bargaining rights for poor sharecroppers because they were the predominant source of labor in the South. As employers in the South, these landowners did not want to share power with sharecroppers who might become unionized. Sharecroppers in the South were not a political force because most could not afford to pay poll taxes that allowed them to vote. The political power in the South emanated from those who owned the land. Passage of the Wagner Act was assured when agricultural workers were

³ 29 U.S.C. § 152(2).

⁴ Gordon Arnold, *The Emergence of Faculty Unions at Flagship Public Universities in Southern New England*, *Labor Studies J.* Winter 1998, 62 at 71.

⁵ *Id.* at 74-81.

exempted from the legislation allowing support from southern conservative Democratic Congressional representatives.⁶

With the passage of Federal labor legislation, the union movement gained extensively in the industrialized states of the Northeast and Midwest. To the contrary, with agricultural workers exempt from coverage of Federal labor law, States in the South never realized any growth in the union movement. This lack of penetration by unions since the 1930's quite accurately predicts the situation today for a State's public employees. Table 1 shows the States that restrict collective bargaining for State employees and teachers. From the table it can be seen that restrictions on collective bargaining for State employees and teachers are predominantly in the Southern region of the country. Midwest and Northeast States overwhelmingly allow collective bargaining for these employees and with few exceptions, are not found in the table. The historic significance of exempting coverage for agricultural workers in the 1930's is still being felt today.

Table 1

States Prohibiting Collective Bargaining: State Employees and School Teachers

State	State Employees	School Teachers
Alabama	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Arizona	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Arkansas	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Georgia	Allowed (No Strikes)	Bargaining Prohibited
Idaho	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
Kentucky	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Maryland	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
Mississippi	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Missouri	Allowed (No Strikes)	Bargaining Prohibited
Nevada	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
North Carolina	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
North Dakota	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
Oklahoma	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
South Carolina	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Tennessee	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed (No Strikes)
Texas	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Utah	Bargaining Prohibited	Allowed
Virginia	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
West Virginia	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited
Wyoming	Bargaining Prohibited	Bargaining Prohibited ⁷

TEACHER PAY AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

⁶ Videotape: The Great Depression: Mean Things Happening (Public Broadcasting Society 1993) (Blackside Inc.).

⁷ JOHN LUND & CHERYL L. MARANTO, PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT IN A TIME OF TRANSITION, 68-91 (D. Belman, et al. eds., 1996).

Teacher unions have received a tremendous amount of negative publicity in recent years, and many believe they are to blame for America's poor state of education. In 1996, Presidential candidate Robert Dole was one of the first prominent politicians to speak poorly of teacher unions during his nomination speech. President George W. Bush is on record as stating that he believed teacher unions have become an obstacle to education reform. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani also singled out teacher unions as holding children back.⁸ With negative comments on teacher's unions coming from many high profile politicians, it is necessary to investigate the evidence.

Unions and Higher Teacher Pay

A fairly recent study focused on whether unions were more successful in gaining resources for teachers in the form of pay and smaller teaching loads. The data was compiled from 10,000 school districts over a period of 30 years. Results show that teacher salaries were 5% higher and had 1.7 pupils fewer than comparable nonunion schools.⁹ An earlier comprehensive study of teacher salaries was done in 1982. In this study wage changes were used to estimate a wage pay premium when a school district moves to union representation for teachers. The estimated pay premium in this study was about 12 percent and is comparable to pay premiums in the private sector. Results indicate that teachers in a district with a collective bargaining agreement will earn significantly more than one that does not have such an agreement and provides a significant economic incentive for teachers to be pro-union. Another study used Census data for school districts in 1970, 1980 and 1990. The most recent data from this study estimates a union pay premium at 5.1% for 1990.¹⁰

Not all opinions agree with the causal assumption that unions provide for higher pay. A contrary opinion to the union enhancement of pay concept suggests that before unions represented teachers, differences in pay for teachers among states already varied dramatically. Some states (predominantly northern and midwestern) paid higher than others (predominantly southern). When unions did gain representation rights for teachers it was largely in States that were already paying higher salaries. This argument criticizes research that bases results on direct comparisons between unionized teachers and those that are not because of pre-existing pay disparities between regions of the country.¹¹ Another perspective suggests that teacher bargaining was highly active from 1965 to 1980 where large teacher representation gains occurred. It can be suggested that this was also a time of high inflation and unions were able to gain unusually large pay increases

⁸ Lala C. Steelman et al., *Do Teacher Unions Hinder Educational Performance? Lessons Learned From The State SAT and ACT Score*, 70 HARV. EDUCATIONAL REVIEW. 437, 438-440. (2000).

⁹ Caroline M. Hoxby, *The Toll of Teacher's Unions*, 342 ECONOMIST. 33, 33-34 (1996).

¹⁰ Joe A. Stone, *Collective Bargaining and Public Schools*, in CONFLICTING MISSIONS? TEACHERS UNIONS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM 47, 47-67 (Tom Loveless ed., 2000).

¹¹ MYRON LIEBERMAN, *THE TEACHER UNIONS*, 208-215 (1997).

during that period. It might be suggested that those previous gains are still reflected in pay differences between union and nonunion teachers today.¹²

Another point involves the fallacy of suggesting that higher salaries for teachers are designed to attract the most qualified individuals. Ironically higher salaries may actually have a negative impact on the quality of teachers. Older teachers may opt to teach longer than they should in order to receive higher pensions that are typically based on salaries and teaching longevity. While this argument suggests, perhaps unfairly, that there is a shelf-life based on a teacher's age, anecdotal evidence abounds that at some point teachers need to retire.

Another negative associated with unionized teachers involves lower student-teacher ratios frequently associated with collective bargaining agreements. Economics indicates that when teacher-student ratios decrease, the total number of teachers must increase when total student enrollments stay the same. More teachers needed to staff a school means a higher cost per student increasing the total cost of instruction for school districts.¹³ While the cost of more teachers is significant, other costs can include expenditures associated with management and staff time, legal and consulting fees, negotiating with state labor relations agencies, hiring arbitrators and mediators, and judicial fees. These additional costs, often difficult to quantify, must be considered for school districts with collective bargaining. When considered nationally, the costs associated with collective bargaining can be extensive and most stakeholders believe these amounts could be better spent on direct educational resources.¹⁴ The argument that the costs of collective bargaining can hurt schools is viable if not exactly quantifiable.

Unions and Student Achievement

A number of studies show that unions improve student achievement. One of the most recent and comprehensive was conducted by Steelman, Powell, and Carini¹⁵ in the *Harvard Educational Review*. Based on the premise that investing in education is an investment in human capital, it suggested that education should be looked at differently than looking at productivity in the private sector. The study looked at State variations in teacher unionization and education productivity measured by SAT and ACT scores. Covered states are defined as those where all teachers are covered by a collective bargaining or meet-and-confer agreements. Six models were used and summaries of their results are shown in Table 2.

¹² *Id.* at 208-215.

¹³ RANDALL A. EBERTS & JOE A. STONE, UNIONS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE EFFECT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON AMERICAN EDUCATION, 38-51 (1984).

¹⁴ LIEBERMAN, *supra* note 11 at 216-217.

¹⁵ Steelman et al., *supra* note 8 at 448-450.

Table 2**Models of Covered Unionized States Compared to Nonunion States***

Model	Criteria	Result
1	SAT scores are regressed on teacher unionization rates	Positive relationship, but not statistically significant
2	SAT scores are regressed on percentage of participation rates of students taking the exam	Nonlinear relationship
3	Effect of teacher unionization rates with participation rates	Positive and significant effect
4	Adds parents education of test-takers	Positive and significant effect
5	Adds percentage of African Americans among test-takers	Positive and significant effect
6	Adds percentage of Latinos and Asian Americans among test-takers	Positive and significant effect

* Similar regression analyses were completed on ACT scores gave similar results.

The authors of the study summarized their findings stating "... we find a statistically significant and positive relationship between State teacher unionization rates and State standardized test scores after controlling for potential confounding factors." In explaining the results, the authors state that unionized schools are more likely to have a lower student-teacher ratio, higher per capita expenditures, higher teacher salaries, better working conditions, better teacher training, and greater worker autonomy.¹⁶

Other studies also suggest that unions provide student achievement benefits. Research by Argys and Rees¹⁷ used math scores from tenth grade from a base of math scores from eighth grade. Results indicated that student performance in union schools increased 1.3% more over the two-year period compared to nonunion schools. Another study using SAT scores and data from the National Assessment of Economic Education survey found that performance improved at a 1.9% rate for union schools compared to nonunion schools.¹⁸ In a study based on fourth grade math students using a pretest-posttest methodology, performance for students in schools with collective bargaining agreements performed 5% percent higher compared to students in nonunion school districts.¹⁹ A similar study on twelfth grade math students using their tenth grade test scores as a control variable concluded that students in unionized districts scored two

¹⁶ *Id.* at 456-459.

¹⁷ Laura M. Argys & Daniel I. Rees, *Detracking America's Schools: Equity at Zero Cost*, 15 J. of POL'Y ANALYSIS & MGMT. 623, 623-629 (1996).

¹⁸ Paul W. Grimes & Charles A. Register, *Teacher Unions and Black Students' Scores on College Entrance Exams*, 30 INDUS. REL. 492, 497-499 (1991).

¹⁹ Randall A. Eberts & Joe A. Stone, *The Effect of Teachers Unions on American Education*, CONF. PROC. ANN. MEETING OF THE EDUC. RES. ASS'N (1986).

percent higher.²⁰ Finally, a 1988 state survey used SAT and ACT test scores to find that students in unionized states scored 6 to 8 percent higher than in states with no collective bargaining.²¹

While most of the research on student achievement in unionized schools shows improvement for student performance, it is not universal. A study by Hoxby²² examined 10,000 school districts between 1960 and 1990 and used dropout rates as a measure of student performance. Results indicated that unionized districts had a 2.3% higher dropout rate than nonunion districts and that the rate increased where there was less competition between schools. If dropout rates are a measure of student performance, then this comprehensive study contradicts some of the previously cited research. As shown in the following case example, collective bargaining in school districts does not ensure success.

A Case Study

Schoolteachers began to bargain collectively in the early 1960s with high hopes of improved academics. However, a study of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) from 1964 to 1996 did not produce the desired results. In 1959 Wisconsin became one of the first states to allow collective bargaining for teachers. The law was actually used for the first time in 1964 when the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA) was recognized as the exclusive collective bargaining unit for teachers. Collective bargaining led to sweeping changes at the MPS because the MTEA was directly involved in many administrative and governance matters.

Bargaining during these 22 years allowed the Milwaukee teachers substantial gains that included pay raises, fringe benefits, improved working conditions, job security, lower student-teacher ratio, and hiring of numerous aides. Although MTEA was able to achieve many gains, low-income minority students had poor academic achievement, teacher morale was low, and union-district relations were unproductive. These gains also resulted in increased tensions among teachers, administrators, and school boards. The contract's continuously increasing size resulted in inflexibility, low teacher job satisfaction and a negative school climate.

High expectations for students are a key component to creating an effective school climate. For twenty years MPS administrators and MTEA used demographic changes in the students as an excuse to lower expectations. Although collective bargaining should have focused on creating a positive climate, the opposite position was taken. On the superintendent's lead, school administrators began to change their thinking and blamed low incomes, drug abuse, delinquency, family mobility, poor parenting, and

²⁰ Martin I. Milkman, *Teacher Unions and High School Productivity* (1987) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon) (on file at University of Oregon).

²¹ M. M. Kleiner & D. Petrie, *Unionism and Licensing of Public School Teachers: Impact on Wages and Educational Output*, in *WHEN PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS UNIONIZE* 305, 305-319 (R. Freeman & C. Ichiowski eds. 1988).

²² Hoxby, *supra* note 9, at 33-34.

crime. The accepted view was that children were bringing serious problems to school and needed more personal attention compared to academic attention.

In 1996-97 the MPS ranked among the lowest in the state. An independent study of four cities from 1981 to 1992 found MPS students performing lower than national norms and actually appeared to be losing ground despite large increases in resources. On several measures of standardized tests, the gap between low-income students and others had been increasingly wider. The MPS also had an extremely small graduation rate of only 38 percent.

In summarizing this case study, it is believed that the collective bargaining contract has been contradictory to school reform. The system currently in place is so entrenched, that it is difficult to change. The MPS and MTEA should agree to bargain publicly and be accountable for negotiating a contract that leads to improved academic achievement.²³

UNION FINANCES, POLITICS, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The NEA

The majority of union revenues are derived from members of the NEA. The NEA is the oldest and largest teacher union in the country with membership of 2.5 million. Membership is open to employees of public school districts, colleges and universities, or any other public educational institution. Members must enroll at both the local and national levels with dues that can range as high as \$700 annually. The NEA is also the most affluent labor organization for teachers where the 1998-1999 budget was approximately \$220 million.²⁴

In 1972 the NEA established the National Education Association Political Action Committee (NEA-PAC) as a separate fund to support its endorsed candidates for national office. NEA-PAC spent more than \$1,600,000 during 2000 election cycle with more than 95% going to Democratic candidates.²⁵ Cash political contributions between 1977 and 1998 were in excess of \$17,000,000 during that period. Of the total amounts given to candidates during this period, 95.87% was given to Democratic candidates, 3.92% was given to Republican candidates, and .22% was given to candidates without Democrat or Republican affiliation.²⁶ To show how closely aligned the NEA is with the Democrats, a review of the 1996 election shows that the NEA supported 251 congressional candidates where all but one of these were Democrats. Candidates are endorsed if they support NEA

²³ Howard R. Fuller et al., *Collective Bargaining in Milwaukee Public Schools*, in CONFLICTING MISSIONS? TEACHERS UNIONS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM 110, 110-148 (Tom Loveless ed., 2000).

²⁴ Harr, *supra* note 1.

²⁵ Educational Policy Institute, *Pac Data*, (visited Nov. 19, 2001) <<http://educationalpolicy.org/data.htm>>.

²⁶ *Id.*

positions on federal funding of schools, collective bargaining, civil rights, health care, employer benefits, and campaign finance reform.²⁷

The AFT

The AFT is one of the fastest growing labor unions in the country, with an average increase in membership of 28,000 a year since 1985. With membership exceeding one million, the AFT had a total 1997-1998 budget of \$88,000,000.²⁸ The agency fees approved by the AFT National Convention for the 2001-2002 academic year were \$130.70.²⁹ The AFT affiliation with the AFL-CIO differentiates this organization from the NEA. This affiliation provides powerful support at all political levels.³⁰

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Committee on Political Education (COPE) is also active in political contributions. AFT-COPE contributed almost \$1,500,000 to political candidates in the 2000 election cycle. Similar to the NEA, Democratic candidates received the bulk of the contributions garnering more than 98% of the total amount. Cash political contributions distributed between 1977 and 1998 were just less than \$8,000,000 during that period. Of this amount, 97.75% was given to Democratic candidates, 2.02% was given to Republicans, and .23% was given to other candidates. As seen from the data, the AFT financially supports Democratic candidates who support the goals of the union.³¹ These goals are similar to those stated previously for the NEA.

Unions and Private Schools

Both the AFT and the NEA are staunchly against privatization of public schools. With privatization, a private-sector company will be awarded a contract to run all functions of the school including administration and instruction within guidelines provided by the government. The goal statement of the AFT's Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel Division states that they "consider privatization a violation of democratic principles since it places in the hands of private industry the responsibility the public has entrusted to its public officials thereby lessening the degree to which voters can hold these officials accountable for the proper administration of public services."³² If schools are privatized, school district employees become employees of private firms and may have bargaining rights under the NLRB. Privatization is becoming more common as both the federal and state governments are using this to help cut costs.

²⁷ National Education Association, *Legislative Action Center*, (visited Nov. 12, 2001) <<http://www.nea.org/lac/>>.

²⁸ Harr, *supra* note 1.

²⁹ American Federation of Teachers, *The Latest AFT News*, (visited Nov. 17, 2002) <<http://www.aft.org/news/index.html>>.

³⁰ AFL-CIO, *The Union Difference*, (visited Jan. 29, 2002) <<http://www.aflcio.org/uniondifference/index.htm>>.

³¹ Educational Policy Institute, *supra* note 25.

³² American Federation of Teachers, *Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel Statement of Goals*, (visited Jan. 20, 2002) <<http://www.aft.org/psrp/publications/goals.html>>.

TEXAS AND TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS: A SOUTHERN STATE EXAMPLE

Current and Pending Legislation

The Texas Constitution places strict guidelines on public employees. Chapter 617.002(a) states “An official of the State or of a political subdivision of the State may not enter into a collective bargaining contract with a labor organization regarding wages, hours, or conditions of employment of public employees.”³³ Chapter 617.003(a) further states that these same employees may not strike or engage in an organized work stoppage against the State or its political subdivision.³⁴ The law does clarify the point that individuals are not prohibited from employment because of membership in a union.³⁵

Each year bills are presented to both the Texas House and Senate in an attempt to amend Chapter 617 from the restrictions placed upon employees of the State or political subdivision. Currently, two pending pieces of legislation that address restrictions on these employees are being considered. House Bill 1345³⁶ and its companion bill Senate Bill 729³⁷ both delete the words “or of a political subdivision of the state” that would then exclude local school districts from the restrictions previously mentioned. These Bills were filed and read in the legislature in February 2001 and are now in committees for further review. House Bill 1528 is a bit more constrictive in that it prohibits collective bargaining only by certain labor organizations that support strikes by public employees but still allows negotiations over wages and working conditions.³⁸

ATPE - Association of Texas Professional Educators

ATPE is a professional association with almost 100,000 members. ATPE does not consider itself as a union but rather as a professional organization that has a non-union policy. Membership is open to everyone in the education community, including teachers, administrators, retirees, college students, and the general public. Annual membership dues range from \$10 for retirees to \$130 for current teachers.³⁹

Positions taken by the ATPE include opposition to strikes, work stoppages, and the anti-union perspective mentioned previously. It is on record as opposing strikes due to the harm it causes to children, the community, and the profession. The ATPE Legislative Impact Committee (ATPE-LIC) is a political action committee that funds issues rather than endorse candidates. Using a collaborative philosophy geared to improving education in Texas is a primary goal. The vision statement of the ATPE is as follows:

³³ TEX. GEN. STAT. § 617.002(a) (1993).

³⁴ TEX. GEN. STAT. § 617.003(a) (1993).

³⁵ TEX. GEN. STAT. § 617.004 (1993).

³⁶ H.R. 1345, 77th Leg., Regular Sess. (Tex. 2001).

³⁷ S. 729, 77th Leg., Regular Sess. (Tex. 2001).

³⁸ H.R. 1528, 77th Leg., Regular Sess. (Tex. 2001).

³⁹ About ATPE, *Frequently Asked Questions*, (visited July 26, 2002)

<<http://www.atpe.org/AboutATPE/faq.htm>>.

“The Association of Texas Professional Educators is the preeminent educator association in Texas and makes a positive difference in the lives of educators and in the lives of schoolchildren. As professionals, our members are committed to supporting quality public education and the professional rights and obligations of the education community. Working in partnership with parents, business, community and government, ATPE provides the programs and services that enable educators and school children to achieve their highest potential.”⁴⁰

TSTA – Texas State Teachers Association

The mission of TSTA is to organize all public education employees to enhance the professional, instructional and economic interest of its members. Its vision over the next five years includes:

- Becoming more receptive and responsive to the diverse needs of its members.
- Becoming results-oriented by achieving outcomes with a clear impact on its members.
- Focus on systematic change.
- Becoming the largest organization of public education employees in Texas.
- Generating resources to expand programs and services to meet TSTA needs.⁴¹

The North Texas Teachers Association and the Austin Teachers Association combined in 1880 to form TSTA. Membership was originally open to anyone interested in the promotion of the welfare of education. Before 1967 there were two teacher organizations in Texas, TSTA for white teachers and the Teachers State Association of Texas for African-American teachers at which time the latter dissolved and joined the TSTA. In 1974 TSTA formed a partnership with the NEA.⁴²

TFT - Texas Federation of Teachers

TFT boasts a membership of 34,000 organized in 23 locals and is affiliated with the AFT. Membership in TFT consists of teachers and other education workers in Texas. The TFT regards educators as first-class citizens whose civil rights are not forgotten when they report to work. The goal of TFT is “to bring dignity to teachers and educational workers by ensuring a decent living salary, decent working conditions, and to deliver full educational opportunities to Texas schoolchildren.”⁴³ With AFT affiliation, not surprisingly the TFT supports collective bargaining with school districts and believes it is necessary if teachers are to be included in the educational decision-making process in

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Texas State Teachers Association, *Who We Are*, (visited Aug. 22, 2002).
<http://63.241.175.202/who_we_are/index.shtml>.

⁴² *Id.* at <http://63.241.175.202/who_we_are/history.shtml>.

⁴³ Texas Federation of Teachers, *On Your Side, At Your Service*, (visited Aug 24, 2002)
<<http://www.tft.org/about/history.cfm>>.

Texas. The TFT strongly supports the pending legislation in Texas that would allow collective bargaining.⁴⁴

TCTA – Texas Classroom Teachers Association

TCTA addresses the interests and concerns of classroom teachers in Texas and has a membership of 40,000.⁴⁵ TCTA only accepts classroom teachers, librarians, counselors, diagnosticians, and other non-administrative personnel. Five membership categories exist with varying dues that range from free for students to \$75 for active members. TCTA has an experienced lobbying group, where in conjunction with some of the other labor organizations in Texas, took credit for some of the success during the 2001 legislative session in Austin. One major gain was the passage of the statewide health insurance plan for teachers. Prior to this passage, some school districts had no health insurance benefit for teachers in the classroom. Another victory was an increase in the Teachers Retirement System multiplier. The result of this increase is that it enhances pension payouts for teachers when they reach retirement age.⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Are teacher unions good or bad for education? Public opinion differs and research results that were previously discussed are inconclusive. A 1998 Gallup Poll asked the public whether they believe teacher unions made a difference in the quality of education. Results showed that 27% believed unions helped, 26% believed they hurt, 37% believed they made no difference, and 10% had no opinion.⁴⁷ The issue is yet to be resolved. What is certain is that those who want collective bargaining in classrooms where it is currently prohibited continue to push for more favorable legislation at the State level.

Without argument, schools must be well organized if teachers are to be creative and productive. School districts need to create systems that promote teachers as professionals. All school employees must feel important in the system and empowered to help children reach their potential. Better labor relationships between teachers, administrators, and school boards are necessary to make better schools. Implementing total quality management (TQM) interventions are needed in order to achieve the desired results that are generally agreed upon. These include customer satisfaction, employee involvement, and continuous improvements in quality.⁴⁸ The debate continues as to whether unions are necessary to help teachers achieve prominence in making schools better.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at <http://www.tft.org/about/vision.cfm>.

⁴⁵ Texas Classroom Teachers Association, < <http://www.tcta.org/tcta/history.htm>.>

⁴⁶ *Id.* at <http://www.tcta.org/tcta/elig.htm>.

⁴⁷ TOM LOVELESS (ED.) CONFLICTING MISSIONS? TEACHERS UNIONS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM 47, 47-67 (2000).

⁴⁸ WILLIAM A. STRESHLY & TODD A. DEMITCHELL, TEACHER UNIONS AND TQM, 25-45 (1994).