

Eagle Forum Report

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NEA: No Education Anywhere

TEACHERS' UNION PUTS CHILDREN LAST

by Linda Harvey, who holds a B.A. in English from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and has done graduate work at Miami, Ohio State University, and Trinity Lutheran Seminary. She is a wife, mother and grandmother and lives in Columbus, Ohio.

Each summer, the National Education Association holds its annual meeting over the Fourth of July weekend with teacher delegates assembling from all over the country. Thousands of educators show up to propose issues for the union to adopt. Despite recent membership losses, NEA remains the nation's largest union, a force that shapes public school education and a strong driver of left-wing politics. The group spends millions on political campaigns and issues, with 98% of that funding going to Democrats and left-wing causes.

In recent years, NEA proceedings have displayed an alarming radical trend. This year was no different, which is bad news for our children and for the nation as a whole. The union's revolutionary tone continues to accelerate with accompanying paranoia to stamp out voices of reason.

As an example, the union launched a scheme ahead of this year's meeting to reduce the impact of conservative participation.

Special interest caucuses have for decades met and manned display booths at the annual meeting. A small

number of these are pro-life and pro-family voices, which have served as a strong witness to an increasingly antagonistic audience. The Ex-Gay Educators' Caucus, for instance, has been a presence for 22 years, as well as an Educators for Life caucus that formed 51 years ago. There's also a caucus on creation science (as opposed to evolution).

This year, the union changed caucus requirements just a few weeks ahead of the annual meeting, doubling membership quotas and demanding more detailed contact information on each member. The outcome was predictable — only 24 approved caucuses showed up in Denver compared to 33 the year before. The Educators for Life Caucus and the Ex-Gay Educators' Caucus were shut out.

Yet the "LGBTQ" caucus was allowed eight exhibit tables. Wonder if they were given advance notice about the rules change?

The pro-life and ex-gay groups convened with signs and literature at tables in a common eating area, but union officials wouldn't allow that

either and shooed them away.

This cancellation of conservatives comes from the union that has been shrieking about alleged censorship in school libraries and urging schools to permit any published book to be available to children, including those containing obscenity. Their campaign



in recent years included banners proclaiming, "Read Banned Books!" But free speech and polite signage — even at lunch — is too threatening for this group to allow.

During a polite dialogue, the officials were surprisingly honest in explaining that the NEA needs to protect itself from outside influencers. Sadly, and perhaps intentionally, this exclusion shuts out believers in Jesus Christ.

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At the meeting, the union considered proposals supporting many aspects of “diversity, equity, inclusion,” including reparations. Both sides of anti-Semitism were represented — proposals challenging anti-Semitism with another seeking alleged balance. A big demonstration convened outside the assembly by supporters of Israel, with signs calling to “End Jew Hatred,” a response to a proposal adopted last year (2025) to boycott educational resources from the Anti-Defamation League. An exhibit table was allowed by “Educators 4 Palestine.”

The union continues to be avid defenders of “LGBTQ” behavior for both teachers and students, and passed a resolution to provide legal and medical assistance for transgender educator members and students, as well as so-called “safety” planning. One resolution stated, “Transgender individuals are facing state-sanctioned violence and erasure,” a claim that is untrue.

The NEA also decided to publish information about the alleged harm of what they call “conversion therapy” for “queer individuals,” especially youth. This practice is actually talk therapy for those with unwanted same sex attraction and it is not harmful.

The union considered multiple anti-ICE and anti-immigration-law resolutions. They want to warn teachers and students about the presence of ICE in their communities, so the union will pay for research about any agreements ICE has with local law enforcement. One new business item accused ICE of “kidnapping” and using immigrants for slave labor.

NEA is opposed to “adultism,” a woke term challenging legal standards protecting children through the authority of parents or other responsible adults. As a Marxist organization, NEA would prefer premature empowerment of youth and division

in the nuclear family.

The union also opposes the Save America Act, alleging voter suppression. They also oppose school choice and vouchers even though schools receive more funding than ever and yet produce a substandard product: declining student proficiency scores.



The insane are allowed ample voice at the NEA. One resolution, which did not pass, proposed rallies this fall calling for the impeachment, conviction, and removal of Donald Trump.

Several proposals called for an end to the war against Iran. One said: “Donald Trump’s war policy is one of genocide and fascism. His attack in Iran and support for Netanyahu’s genocide in Lebanon is intended to demonstrate his authoritarian power to use U.S. military forces to impose dominance against the world.”

Another proposal called for a no-confidence vote against Robert F. Kennedy as Health and Human Services Secretary.

Those who attend the NEA Representative Assembly are delegates elected by other teachers to have a voice at the meeting. We know that not all teachers support such outrageous, immoral, anti-child, anti-American policies. But enough do, and if we are to stop the influence of the NEA, the remaining sane teachers need to stop paying dues to this destructive union as well as the American Federation of Teachers.

Yet again this year, the NEA

avoided the elephant in the room — dismal student test scores. When will this group admit responsibility for that outcome, despite ever-higher education spending?

New reports reveal that in Ohio, 68% of fourth graders are not proficient in reading and 68% of eighth graders are not proficient in math. In New York State, the government spends \$43 billion on education, which is the highest per capita in the nation. Yet New York schools report declining enrollment and deplorable performance.

Nationally, the NAEP report (the Nation’s Report Card) for 2024 showed reading proficiency down at both the 4th grade and 8th grade levels. One-third of eighth graders cannot even perform basic reading, which is a higher percentage than ever before. Across the board, national scores are below those of pre-COVID years.

Which members of this union will step up to claim responsibility for this? Will no one raise his/her hand?

Apparently not. Those hands are too busy holding May Day/No Kings/Abolish ICE signs and rainbow flags to bend down to help a struggling young reader. This union urges governors to refuse the \$6.5 billion in the Education Freedom Tax Credit program, because it’s more important to hate the Trump administration, and school choice than for families to have funding assistance to improve their child’s education. NEA would claim that these credits are part of the scheme to “destroy public education.”

No, you folks are doing that all by yourselves.

Teachers, leave the union now. Parents, wake up and remove your precious children from the progressive hell of government schools. If not, then take back control of your local schools from these corrupt anti-education “educators.” 

TEACHING TEACHERS TO LIE

by Alliance Defending Freedom, the world's largest legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, the sanctity of life, parental rights, and God's design for marriage and family.

A substitute teacher in good standing was shocked when she learned that her continued employment would depend on her willingness to affirm a lie.

Kim Polk found out that she would need to comply with the district's "Guidelines for Student Gender Identity." The policy would have compelled her to use "preferred" pronouns inconsistent with a student's biological sex while prohibiting her from telling parents that the school was actively facilitating their child's "transition" to a different gender.

Based on her Christian beliefs, Polk could not lie to parents or to her students by using wrong-sex pronouns. But she was willing to use students' preferred names and to avoid using pronouns altogether for students who identified as the opposite sex.

Despite Polk's willingness to accept a compromise, the district demanded that she affirmatively use biologically incorrect pronouns or stop teaching. Left with no other choice, and not wanting to stand idly by as the district drives Christian teachers out of the classroom, Polk filed this lawsuit.

No teacher should be forced to lie to parents and to personally affirm a belief about human sexuality that violates their core beliefs. Yet, by one count, over 1,200 school districts nationwide have similar gender-identity policies, affecting teachers at more than 21,000 schools.

Every job requires something of the people who do it. But no one should be forced to say something they believe is a lie just to keep their job. When the employer is the government, the Constitution *forbids* it from forcing its employees to personally endorse the government's viewpoint on controversial issues like gender identity.

Yet, across the country, thousands of schoolteachers work in school districts with policies that do just that. Teachers must use pronouns inconsistent with the student's sex and keep that fact from the student's parents unless the child says otherwise. For a teacher who sees pronouns as a matter of truth rather than personal preference, there's no soft landing in that policy — just a choice between one's job and one's conscience.

Montgomery County, Maryland,

put that very choice to a substitute teacher named Kim Polk.

Polk substitute-taught for Montgomery County Public Schools during the 2021–2022 school year. She built up her students, and treated them the way any good mother and teacher would — with courtesy, respect, and an eye toward what was best for each child. The feedback she received was "very positive." Polk expected the district would want her to sub more the following year, ideally three full days a week.

Instead, she effectively got an ultimatum: Betray your conscience or lose your ability to teach.

In August 2022, Polk signed in to MCPS's teacher portal for mandatory training and learned that she would have to affirm that she would comply with the district's Guidelines for Student Gender Identity. Among other requirements, to keep teaching, she would have to confirm two things. First, that she would use a student's "preferred" pronouns — even when those pronouns don't match the student's sex. Second, that she would hide from parents if their child was socially "transitioning" to a different gender at school, unless the child expressly consented.

Polk is a Christian. She believes God creates people male or female and that calling a child by a pronoun that denies that reality would mean lying to that child. She also believes parents, not the school district, hold the God-given responsibility to raise their kids. Hiding a child's "gender transition" from a parent isn't a technicality to her. It's a betrayal of that responsibility.

Still, Polk hoped to keep teaching in Montgomery County schools — especially in the lower grades where she is less likely to have a student who



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identifies as transgender. So she asked the school district for an accommodation instead of walking away.

Montgomery School Rejected its Own Rule

Polk tried to reach a compromise. She offered to use a student's preferred name and to limit her substitute work to elementary schools and the preschool special-education program, where the policy's pronoun mandate was less likely to be an issue. She didn't want to be forced to use biologically incorrect pronouns or have to lie to parents.

An MCPS official actually discussed a possible accommodation with her that would have allowed her to keep teaching without having to violate her beliefs. But then the school district rejected that accommodation less than a month later, once again putting Polk in an impossible position. Unable to violate her conscience just to keep her job, Polk filed this lawsuit.

What happened in Polk's case?

A federal district court dismissed Polk's free exercise and free speech claims in January 2025. A divided 2-1 panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit affirmed that dismissal a year later.

Vigorously dissenting from that decision, Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson wrote that the majority's logic would let a school district "mandate that teachers voice opinions contrary to their own without any First Amendment protection whatsoever." Weighing Polk's objection against the district's interests, Judge Wilkinson wrote that the balance tipped in Polk's favor as clearly as if "MCPS were playing seesaw with a lead

block." The school district's violation of Polk's First Amendment rights should have been obvious.

But that was not the last stop for Polk's case.

In June 2026, Polk, represented by a coalition of attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom; Claybrook LLC; Gammon & Grange, P.C.; and the National Legal Foundation, asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear her case, *Polk v. Montgomery County Public Schools*.

This isn't the first time Montgomery County has tried to keep parents in the dark. In *Mahmoud v. Taylor* (2025), the Supreme Court already ruled against this same board of education by holding that the school board had to notify parents and allow religious opt-outs from instruction using "LGBTQ+-inclusive" books.

Polk's case raises the next natural question: If parents have a right to know their child is being taught particular ideas about sexuality and gender, do teachers have a right not to be forced to keep parents in the dark when their child is *living out* those ideas at school, hour by hour, with the district's help and without their parents' consent?

The stakes of this case reach well past one Maryland classroom. Thousands of teachers nationwide are dealing with school-district policies containing similar compelled-pronoun and secret-transition requirements. And millions of parents send their K-12 students to those same schools.

The government cannot compel a teacher to speak messages she

believes to be false, and it cannot enlist her to keep parents in the dark about what's happening to their own children at school.

Timeline of *Polk v. Montgomery County Public Schools* Lawsuit

- **August 2022:** After successfully substitute teaching in the 2021-2022 school year, Polk learns she will be forced to comply with her school district's Guidelines for Student Gender Identity, which violate her beliefs.
- **November 2022:** Polk formally requests a religious accommodation.
- **December 2022:** MCPS's compliance coordinator discusses and outlines the terms of a possible accommodation with Polk. But MCPS later rejected the accommodation request that its own staff had helped craft.
- **May 2024:** Polk files suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland, alleging religious discrimination, free exercise, and free speech violations.
- **January 2025:** The district court rejects Polk's free exercise and free speech claims.
- **February 2025:** Polk appeals to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit.
- **January 2026:** A divided 4th Circuit panel affirms the dismissal.
- **June 2026:** Polk's legal team files a petition asking the U.S. Supreme Court to hear her case. 

This article originally appeared on Alliance Defending Freedom's website, [ADFlegal.org](https://adflegal.org).

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