



# NEA is working to provide great public schools Directors' Newsletter

April 2016

## Time to turn off pipeline

### It's needed to end institutional racism

NEA's Committee on Discipline and the School to Prison Pipeline met for nearly a year and came to a single conclusion: If America's schools want to end institutional racism, it must start with ending the school to prison pipeline.



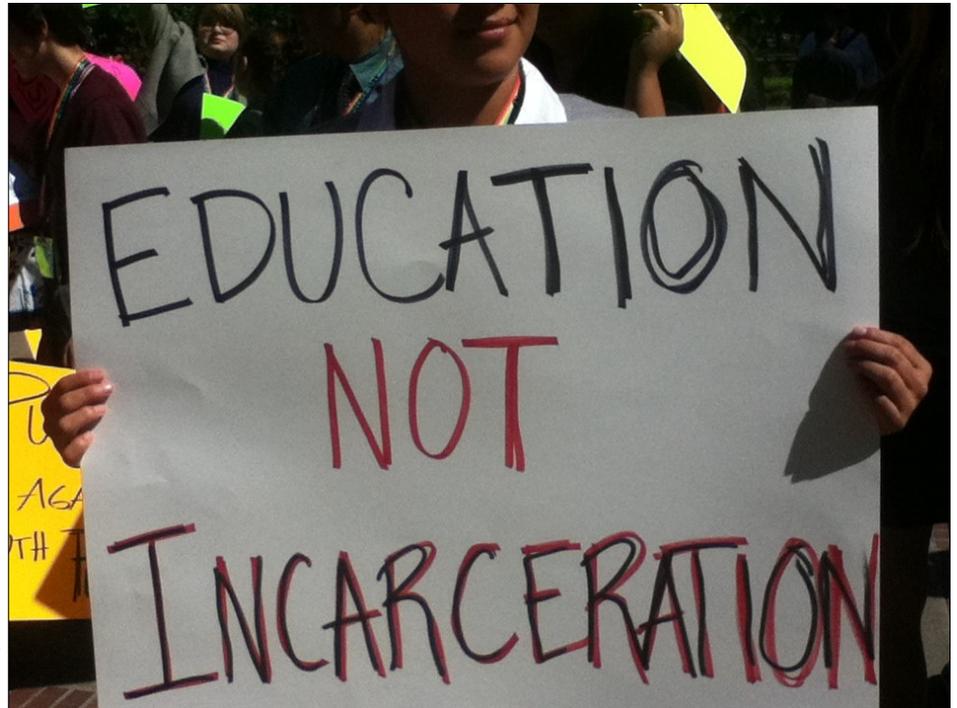
GILBERT

The committee released a 74-page report on this issue as well as a 4-page proposed Policy Statement at the NEA board meeting on Friday. The school to prison pipeline is the system of policies and procedures that push students out of schools and put them in direct contact with law enforcement.

Committee co-chair Kevin Gilbert punctuated the release by telling the story of his own 10-year-old son.

"It started with an incident over a mechanical pencil," Gilbert said, standing at the podium in front of the 180 members of the NEA Board of Directors. "The teacher equated (my son) to a monster."

Gilbert said he listened and couldn't believe it. The school system that should have been a support mechanism had failed him. His



son was suspended for two days.

"My son wasn't getting support from his parents or from the school," Gilbert said. "I sat there hurt. I felt like I was too busy being an

educator and not a parent."

Gilbert is a teacher and former school principal from Mississippi. His story brought

*(Continued on page 8)*

### Maryland's NEA Directors

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## Clinton to address delegates at RA

The 2016 NEA Representative Assembly is rapidly approaching, and many of the details are beginning to take shape.

Michael Edwards, the NEA's senior director at the Center for Governance, informed the Board of Directors that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will be in attendance to address the delegates. The date is unknown, but it will be sometime between July 4-7. When she attends, it will make good on the promise she made at the NEA Town Hall in October to be present for the RA.



CLINTON

### Page 5: PAC Council recommends general election endorsement

In addition to that news, Edwards also shared that NEA will be commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the merger between the NEA and American Teachers Association (a Black teachers organization). This will be the highlight of the afternoon's festivities on the Fourth of July. Due to this special event and planned festivities, the NEA choir will not perform. The merger will also be a focal point at the Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner.



# Educators earn accolades

## Director McGuire-Grigg named 2016 ESP of Year

Doreen McGuire-Grigg, an NEA Board Member from California, recalled her seminal moment as a union leader for her and her para-educator colleagues in the Lakeport Unified School District.

“It was 1992ish,” she remembered. “Our superintendent came in and said we had no say-so in what our health benefits were. The teachers did. He said the teachers had a union and we didn’t.”

“He organized us!” she grinned.

Don’t let her kid you -- McGuire-Grigg may have had a little something to do with it as well. And it’s for this and several other reasons this 28-year para at Terrace Middle School was honored as the ESP of the Year at the NEA’s annual ESP Conference in Orlando, FL, on March 12.

“When it is necessary to advocate for our ESP constituents, Doreen is front and center steering the charge,” California Teachers Association President Eric Heins told the [NEA Today](#). “She leads by example because she is always fully informed and her tone appropriate to the cause.”

## CEA member Hayes 2016 Teacher of Year

NEA member Jahana Hayes, a high school history teacher at John F. Kennedy High School in Waterbury, CT, was named 2016 National Teacher of the Year by the Council of Chief School Officers.

Hayes, who is to be honored in a White House ceremony with President Barack Obama May 3 during Teacher Appreciation Week, will address the NEA during its Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C., July 4-7.

“Teachers exposed me to a different world by letting me borrow books to read at home and sharing stories about their college experiences,” Hayes told the [NEA Today](#). “So many things that [teachers do] fall outside of traditional teaching responsibilities. It is those times when I am transformed into an advisor, counselor, confidant, and protector.”

Hayes will spend the next year traveling the nation to represent educators.

One of her students thinks she will be



California Board of Director Doreen McGuire-Grigg was named 2016 ESP of the Year at the annual ESP Conference earlier this year in Orlando.

As the ESP of the Year, McGuire-Grigg will spend the coming year traveling the country advocating for her ESP colleagues. It’s a challenge and opportunity she is eager to get started.

“I’m looking forward to talking to the people in the bus garages and the cafeterias and on the grounds,” she said. “I’m eager to find out from them what we *all* can do to help the whole student succeed in school.”



2016 Teacher of the Year, Jahana Hayes.

fabulous in the role of education advocate. Senior Makyle Hawk told his fellow students that Hayes being named National Teacher of the Year signifies the start of change long overdue. “Mrs. Hayes is sacrificing a year away from the things she loves the most to provide a voice for communities who have, for so long, been underrepresented.”

## Five receive Hall call

The latest class of inductees to The National Teachers Hall of Fame was unveiled and introduced to the NEA Board April 29.

Collectively, the five inductees of the Class of 2016 have 148 years teaching experience. The quintet is: Kimberly Stewart Bearden, Atlanta, GA, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts; Debra Hurst, Austin, TX, retired pre-K, Kdg, Inclusion, ESL Teacher; June Teisan, Harper Woods, MI, retired 7<sup>th</sup> grade science; Wade Whitehead, Roanoke, VA, 5<sup>th</sup> grade; and Jennifer de Grassi Williams, Nampa, ID, retired pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade art.

“The 2016 inductees embody the best attributes of the teaching profession and are deeply committed to the success of their students,” NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said.

2016 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Teachers Hall of Fame. The Hall ([www.nthf.org](http://www.nthf.org)) is located on the campus of Emporia State University in Emporia, KS.



# Taking up the fight

## Keisling to NEA Board: 'Educate about transition'

Mara Keisling has been using the women's bathroom for 20 years without incident, but she would be breaking the law in at least two states if she did that now because this choice doesn't match her birth certificate.

As the Executive Director of the National Center for Transgender Equity, Keisling advocates for support for transgender people. But she's not worried about her choices about using the bathroom. She is worried about transgender children and the discrimination that they are facing right now when they make that choice.

"They are the extraordinary kids who have had to do what most kids don't. They have to look at themselves and think, 'I might get hurt, 'I might get killed,' or 'I might lose my job,'" Keisling said. Speaking to the NEA Board of Directors, she said, "Look for these kids and nurture these kids."

Inside classrooms, Keisling said, educators can do a lot to help transgender students. "Be an educator about diversity, be an educator about transition," she said "Think about how you react to it. Think about when you say boys over there and girls over there and you see that one kid twitch a little."

NEA Vice President Becky Pringle pledged NEA's support to fight against the discrimination that is emerging through state laws in North Carolina and Mississippi. Because of those bad laws, Pringle said, "That makes this the perfect time to celebrate ... We must never allow the T in LGBTQ to be silent. The fight for transgender equality is our fight. It is our fight, NEA. And we will take up that fight."

Keisling did her graduate work at Harvard University, and in 2005 she won the award for the Harvard Outstanding Person of the Year.

Keisling gave example after example of transgender students in schools across the country who have experienced discrimination. She spoke with Skye Thompson, a 15-year-old transgender student in North Carolina, who is worried every day he goes to school about whether he will be bullied when he uses the restroom.

Thompson wrote a letter to the governor of North Carolina. "By putting this law in place you're putting kids like me in danger," he wrote. But the governor wouldn't meet with Thompson.

The state laws emerged in numerous states because lawmakers said bathroom use was an "emergency" issue. Keisling disagrees. She said there is already a system for this and calls it the "ruckus rule of bathroom use." In this system, people use the restroom that will create the least amount of ruckus.

Keisling also noted that, "some people make a ruckus no matter where they use a restroom, but until we decide everything is gender neutral, there has to be an honor system about this."

NEA has produced a guide to help educators work with transgender students, available on the edCommunities website, called the "Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools."

Keisling wants the transgender movement to link with other social justice movements in America. "We believe we have an obligation to fight, and we believe that we have an obligation to win. But we believe we have to have a moral movement and an effective movement. We can't have it if the movement is not anti-poverty, anti-racist, and a pro-worker movement."

"We need to show up for you, and you need to show up for us," Keisling said to the NEA Board.

Keisling has a quote on her office wall that gives her inspiration. The poet Audre Lorde wrote, "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."



Mara Keisling challenged the NEA to lead in the transgender equality fight.

## Board supports NBI challenging states' LGBTQ discrimination laws

The NEA Board of Directors took a stand against LGBTQ discrimination at its recent meeting by agreeing unanimously to a new business item that would increase efforts to fight against emerging state laws that legalize discrimination.

The passage of laws in North Carolina and Mississippi that forbid transgender people from using public bathrooms of their choice spurred the NEA board to draft language to bring to the Representative Assembly July 4-7.

The NBI calls for NEA to join legal challenges in states with such laws, step up pressure on the federal government to enforce Title IX protections, continue to raise awareness and distribute information that helps educators work with transgender children, and other efforts.

"We have to stop hate-sponsored state discrimination in this country," said Kevin Gilbert, the NEA Executive Committee member who moved the NBI. "We have to stand up and say enough is enough."

Educators on the NEA board shared stories of working with transgender students in schools. Tim Sheehan, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and board member from Massachusetts, spoke of the struggle of a girl that was obviously depressed as early as kindergarten. Over her seven years at the school, the staff met repeatedly with parents and shared strong concerns about suicide and self-harm.

"Over the course of middle school, this student made a transition," Sheehan said. Thanks to the supportive schools, "He didn't lose one friend in the process. ... Now he's in high school and volunteering. He's now one of the happiest teenagers I've met in my life. It's truly an amazing thing to see a child who is happy in his body and happy in the world."

Washington board member Martha Patterson encouraged her colleagues to remember the role that many educators play as parents. "I tell my children that I'm supporting their rights," she said. "My daughter asked, 'Why?' and I said, 'Because people do discriminate.'"

# Board takes position on 18 proposed changes

NEA's Representative Assembly will vote on 18 proposed changes to the NEA constitution, bylaws, and standing rules this summer in Washington, D.C. The board discussed each item and took positions on each.

**Constitutional Amendment 1** would add the requirement that nearly every NEA committee include at least one certified support service provider. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Constitutional Amendment 2** would add a two-year term for a student director on the NEA board. Currently, there are three student directors on the NEA board, and all three serve one-year terms. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

**Bylaw Amendment 1** would require approval of active member dues each year by a majority vote at the Representative Assembly. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Bylaw Amendment 1A** would change the way dues are allocated in merged local affiliates with 20,000 or more members. Right now, in non-merged states, the only local that this would affect is United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA). The bylaw would allow the dues allocation to be determined by the local's merger agreement. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

**Bylaw Amendment 2** would prohibit secret ballot elections during Representative Assembly deliberation of new business. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Bylaw Amendment 3** would add a definition of "certified support service provider" to NEA's documents. This definition would include psychologists, therapists, counselors, and special educators. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 1** would limit each delegate speaking on a motion to two minutes. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 2** would limit to one minute the amount of unused speaking time a delegate may yield to another delegate. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 3** would amend the speaking order process to take one speaker for, one speaker against, and one request for information. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 3A** would require requests for information to be taken in turn: one speaker for, one against, and two requests for information. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 3B** would give the makers of a motion the chance to speak for one minute if their NBI was included as part of a motion to refer or bundle. The board took NO POSITION on this amendment.



**Standing Rule Amendment 4** would strike language that was added last year to make debatable motions to suspend the rules. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 5** would allow publication of a contact person's email address for proposed Representative Assembly actions, with express written consent from the contact person. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 6** would change the deadline for submission of new business items to no later than 5 p.m. on the first day of the Representative Assembly. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 7** would require NBIs to have titles (no more than 10 words). The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 8** would require that NBIs only be accepted if they are written as action items. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 9** would require that the cost of NBIs shall not exceed 35 percent of the budgeted contingency fund. NEA's bylaws require that the contingency fund be no less than \$1 million and no more than one percent of the budget. The amount spent at recent RA's is as follows: 2010, \$571,270; 2011, \$90,754; 2012, \$98,824; 2013, \$196,849; 2014, \$821,797; and 2015, \$1.4 million. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

**Standing Rule Amendment 10** would add to the definition of campaign materials and the rules governing them to include items promoting passage or defeat of Constitutional or Bylaw amendments. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

## 2016-18 NEA budget recommended for RA approval

At its April meeting, the NEA board recommended approval of a \$365 million budget for 2016-18 to the Representative Assembly. The budget represents an increase of \$7.6 million from the current year's budget, thanks to an expected increase of 28,000 members.

Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss said the Budget Committee had been challenged to think differently. "We're putting a down payment on the future with this budget," she said.

The budget includes a priority focus on ESSA implementation, as well as the ongoing work to end institutional racism.

To implement the new federal education law, NEA will identify professional practice

leaders to fulfill the law's promise of engaging educators and incorporating their suggestions and ideas as states and districts make important decisions about testing, accountability, evaluation, and standards.

NEA's focus on institutional racism started at the 2015 RA, when a new business item on the topic passed unanimously. NEA's conferences and trainings have addressed racism in deeper and more personal ways. NEA has also developed additional support documents and research to bolster efforts to end institutional racism.

NEA's budget was built around two overriding goals: building strong affiliates and em-

powering educators for student success. Specific increases and decreases have been spelled out and will be available to RA delegates for consideration at the July meeting.

In addition, NEA is putting additional resources into engaging and assisting new career educators. Member surveys indicate that new educators want support from their union on how to become great at their jobs. The budget proposes spending \$5.8 million on this.

No major changes have been proposed in conferences and trainings, even though the focus on many events will shift to match the organization's priorities.



# PAC moves Clinton endorsement

“Hill, Yes!”

That’s the message coming from the NEA PAC Council.

The Council requested the NEA Board of Directors support the Council’s recommendation of Hillary Clinton to the Representative Assembly delegates as the recommended candidate for President of the United States.

The Board concurred with the Council’s recommendation, which now moves to RA for its consideration during the annual meeting and convention of the NEA, July 4-7 in Washington, D.C.

“Our members, since the action of this Board last October (when the NEA Board voted to endorse Clinton in the Democratic primaries), have been enthusiastically involved in this campaign,” said NEA Vice President Becky Pringle. “They’ve been out knocking on doors and making phone calls and do you know what, the (Clinton) campaign has taken notice. ... They see our shirts wherever they go. They understand



Nevada NEA Board members, from left, Natha Anderson, Brian Flick, and Nevada President Ruben Murillo, Jr. show their support for Hillary Clinton.

our members are reliable, enthusiastic voters.” During debate on the item, there was a substitute motion to postpone action until the Board’s July 1 meeting. After much debate on this, it was defeated by a voice vote. Discussion returned to the main motion, which quickly ended in concurrence. Natha Anderson, NEA Director from Nevada and member of the NEA PAC Council, believed it was the correct decision of the Board to concur.

“Because of the timing (of our Primary endorsement) in October we were able to get our members involved,” she said. “We had our membership involvement increase by over 6,000 (from primary season in 2008).”

Anderson also noted: “Our language is in her policies. I’ve heard the same words (the NEA) says. ... We *are* relevant in this campaign.”

## NEA News in Brief

### Board authorizes release of crisis funds to 3 states

The NEA Board of Directors took action on three separate requests for funds from the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund.

The Georgia Association of Educators received up to \$1.5 million in its attempt to thwart Gov. Nathan Deal’s constitutional amendment, which would implement a so-called “Opportunity School District.” If passed, a superintendent appointed by – and reporting only to – the governor could take over up to 20 “chronically failing” schools per year.

The Maine Education Association was awarded up to \$500,000 as it seeks to pass a 3-percent surcharge on households with income of \$200,000 or more to be used for education funding. Estimates show this would impact about 2-percent of the population and raise \$157 million in the first year.

The Oregon Education Association was granted up to \$2 million as it fights a pair of so-called “Right to Work” initiative petitions. One, IP 62, would allow for freeloaders as well as allowing non-union employees to run for union positions. The other, IP 69, would allow for different employment terms for union and non-

union employees.

With these allocated potential expenditures, the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund balance stands at not less than \$58 million.

Additionally, the Board approved an allocation of up to \$5 million to the Behind the Wall team to pay for public communication and activities to support ballot measures in targeted states.

### Stocks lays out NEA priorities for remainder of 2016

During his report to the NEA Board of Directors, Executive Director John Stocks laid out three focus priorities which he said must be achieved prior to the end of the 2016 calendar year. They were:

- Beginning full implementation of the 2016-18 Strategic Plan and Budget
- Having success in the presidential election
- Successfully moving the Senate to hold confirmation hearings and a vote on the next Supreme Court justice

“There is contemplated within the Strategic Plan and Budget us making a down payment on the future of our union,” Stocks said. “We recruit the brunt of our new members from July 15 to Nov. 15. Therefore we will set a goal of having a one-on-one conversation with every

new hire who comes into any workplace environment. We want to ask them why they came into the profession and where they came from? ... We must not go and *sell* new hires a membership but rather go and *listen* to new hires and *invite* them to join us.”

### Pringle discusses initiatives during her report to Board

NEA Vice-President Becky Pringle highlighted a variety of initiatives during her report at the Board of Directors’ recent meeting.

Foremost was the work of NEA’s Conference Alignment Team. The group is charged with providing the direction of the individual conference planning teams, as well as making sure the NEA’s agenda regarding Early Career Educators, Institutional Racism, and ESSA implementation are embedded in each.

Pringle was pleased to share the overall positive reviews of the NEA’s Leadership Summit in Dallas, Feb. 24-26, which had over 1,500 attendees.

Pringle also highlighted the progress of the organization’s work on NBI B on Institutional Racism. To this point, most of the NEA’s work has surrounded awareness. Moving forward, Pringle added, the NEA will partner with the group Race Forward (raceforward.org) for further strategy and work development regarding Institutional Racism.

# Opportunities abound with ESSA implementation

It's been nearly five months since President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act, and all of NEA's 51 state affiliates are now engaged in implementation.

While nobody misses No Child Left Behind, educators have a lot more work to do to make the new law live up to its promise of improving America's education system.

"Implementation presents huge, huge opportunities," said NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, as she described NEA's work to support good implementation.

Members can get information about the new law and sign up to get regular updates at [www.nea.org/ESSAbegins](http://www.nea.org/ESSAbegins).

NEA has produced two dozen documents detailing the specifics within the law. But understanding every piece isn't easy.

"ESSA is 1,000 pages of ambiguity," said Shelly Moore Krajacic, the NEA Executive Committee member in charge of the Association's implementation efforts.

What is clear, though, is the law provides educators a chance to participate in remaking education laws to fit their school, Krajacic said.

"I don't want anyone to think that lack of understanding of the bill prevents them from being engaged in the process," she said. "A site-based plan should be the goal of every school in the country."

Even though the law is daunting in its size and scope, Krajacic urged members to dream big and start with a vision of what they



**Executive Committee member Shelly Moore Krajacic, here reading to youngsters in Phoenix as part of Read Across America, leads the NEA's ESSA implementation team.**

want their schools to look like.

The law guarantees educators the chance to provide input on the law's biggest components: Testing, Accountability, Standards, and Evaluations.

Krajacic said that members should focus on one thing in the law and become an expert, or create a team to engage together.

"There isn't a single contract in the country that says that a group of second-grade teachers can't sit down and create a plan for their school," Krajacic said. "Don't wait to be asked."

# NEA launches new website for legislative advocacy

The NEA has unveiled a new website to help members get engaged in politics.

The Legislative Action Center (located at: <http://edadvocracy.nea.org/home>) is a smooth, one-stop location to help members get the information they need about the most important political issues faced by students and schools. This website went live in April.

The top issue at the moment is the Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland. Members are urged to "Take Action Now" and sign a petition calling on Republican Senators to conduct hearings for Garland and take a confirmation vote. Some 6,000 members have already signed the petition.

The website includes tracking of current federal legislation, a congressional report card, and easy ways for members to contact their Congressional representatives. It also includes a specific section on ESSA with all of NEA's documents about how to implement the law well, along with other appropriate links.



# Board lobbies Congress on variety of topics

## SCOTUS, nutrition, CTE among issues discussed

The NEA Board of Directors devoted the bulk of its Thursday to lobbying Congressional delegations on a variety of topics including: Child Nutrition Reauthorization, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Reauthorization (aka Perkins Act), Repeal of the Government Pension Offset (GPO)/Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), D.C. Private School Vouchers, and the Supreme Court Nomination.

"As we build our lobbying issues, we look at items that are student centered and what is topical," said Mary Kusler, Director of NEA Government Relations Department. "Those are by far our number one drivers. We also look at what have been long-standing priorities for the NEA and what our committees stand for."

Kusler noted that for so long – 14 years to

be exact – seeking reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has been at the forefront of lobby topics. That changed with passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act in December.

This time around, members of both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate heard from Directors about CTE and GPO/WEP Repeal. The CTE Reauthorization would help ensure all students – particularly underserved students -- have access to high-quality CTE programs, provide real career pathways, and include CTE educator voices at all levels of decision making. The GPO/WEP Repeal focuses on the Social Security Fairness Act (House Resolution 973), which the NEA strongly supports, calling for the repeal of both GPO/WEP that together deprive nearly 9 million hard-working Americans of the Social Security benefits they have earned.

In Senate offices, NEA Board members requested the senators to uphold their Constitu-

tional responsibility and do their job by conducting a hearing and an up-and-down vote on President Barack Obama's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court: Merrick Garland, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Finally, House members were provided the NEA perspective on Child Nutrition and D.C. Private School Vouchers. One of the key talking points on nutrition was imploring the House Education and Workforce Committee to eliminate language from its bill that would cut up to 7,000 schools and 3.4 million students out of the Community Eligibility Program. This program provides free breakfast and lunch to entire schools that collectively meet certain requirements. The issue in our nation's capital focuses on the Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) Act which will allow public dollars to go to private schools without being subject to the federal civil rights laws that public schools must meet.

# Empty seat = Uncertainty

## Divided Supreme Court affirms Friedrichs v. CTA

With a nine-word decision in March, the United States Supreme Court ended the Friedrichs v. CTA case.

“The judgment is affirmed by an equally divided Court,” wrote the court on March 29. This decision preserves agency fee, or fair share, as a possible element of collective bargaining.

Although the decision was praised by NEA leaders, the Association’s General Counsel Alice O’Brien said that she expects that similar cases will reach the court in the future. She estimated there are at least 31 cases working their way through the court system.

The decision in Friedrichs does not set precedent, and future cases could be even more extreme than this case, O’Brien said.

The death of Justice Antonin Scalia remains an issue for the court because President Barack Obama’s appointment of Merrick Garland to fill the seat has been blocked by Senate Republicans.

“We know that currently composed, the court seems reluctant to get into the issue again,” O’Brien said, noting the court declined to take up an agency fee case in April. “But that could change, depending on who is the ninth justice on the court.”

O’Brien noted that right-wing think tanks have hired many lawyers to litigate cases similar to Friedrichs, so she expects more cases.

“This is going to continue to be a hot area of litigation, no matter what happens with the ninth justice,” she said.

O’Brien said that Garland has impeccable credentials and integrity and noted that public opinion about the decision by Republicans to block the nomination are shifting. In February, 43 percent of Americans wanted Congress to “vote this year,” while 42 percent want to “leave vacant” the Supreme Court seat. In April, it shifted to 52 percent vote and 30



percent leave vacant.

NEA is working with 82 organizations to try to persuade Congress to hold confirmation hearings. Using the hashtag #DoYourJob, people are tweeting about the issue. A petition on the website [edadvocacy.nea.org](http://edadvocacy.nea.org) has already received more than 6,000 signatures. A group of social studies teachers from across the country wrote a letter to the two ranking party chairs in the Senate trying to persuade them to hold hearings.

O’Brien said the next President will likely have the chance to appoint anywhere from two to four justices. If that President is someone who is labor friendly, that could make a difference in cases about vouchers, affirmative action, campaign finance, and collective bargaining.

“This means that we could have, for the first time in my lifetime and all of your lifetimes, a Supreme Court that is receptive to workers’ rights,” O’Brien said.

## Teachers take Senate leaders to school

A group of 12 civics, government, history, and social studies teachers from around the country recently composed a letter and sent it to Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Harry Reid (D-NV) insisting the Senate perform its Constitutional duty with regards to conducting hearings on President Barack Obama’s nominee for the United States Supreme Court, Merrick Garland. Here is the body of their letter:

*Dear Senators McConnell and Reid*

*As history, civics, and social studies educators, we urge the United States Senate to do its job and hold a hearing and an up-or-down vote on the President’s nominee for the United States Supreme Court: Merrick Garland, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.*

*As we teach our students, Article 2, Section 2 of the Constitution stipulates that it is the President’s duty to nominate Supreme Court justices and the Senate’s duty to provide “advice and consent”—take action on such nominations. Moreover, as Alexander Hamilton wrote in the Federalist Papers, the Senate should not reject a nominee unless there are “special and strong reasons for the refusal.” Judge Garland is clearly qualified and holds the high ethical standards expected of a Supreme Court justice.*

*If a student answered on an exam that our Presidents lose the power to appoint Supreme Court justices in the fourth year of their term, that answer would be marked “incorrect”—neither the text of the Constitution nor tradition justify it. In fact, since 1875, every Supreme*

*Court nominee has received either a hearing or a vote. Those nominated or confirmed in the final year of a President’s term include John Marshall, one of the earliest chief justices, and Anthony Kennedy, who was nominated by President Ronald Reagan and still serves.*

*As educators in the classroom, we believe it is our responsibility to help students learn about—and appreciate—the role citizens play in our democracy. We teach that being a good citizen requires cooperation, mutual respect, and the ability to compromise. When our students work in groups, they work together and do their jobs, even when they are not friends or have disagreements.*

*Please help us teach our students the true meaning of democracy. Demonstrate that America’s leaders can put aside their differences to do their jobs. For the sake of the students who are the future of America, we urge you to hold a hearing and up-or-down vote on Judge Garland, the President’s nominee for the Supreme Court.*

Signed: Joanne Beaver (PA), Jim Griffin (UT), Patrick Chambers (IN), Lisa Petrey-Kirk (KY), Valerie Jackson (SC), John deVillie (NC), Pete Clancy (IA), Megan Tuttle (NH), Kerry Konda (SD), Marisol Garcia (AZ), Gina Daniels (OH), & Nathan Ugoretz (WI).

(To see the full letter you may visit the NEA website here: <http://www.nea.org/home/66505.htm>. At this site there is a link to an online petition the public is urged to sign to move the Senate into holding confirmation hearings.)

# Perspective inside the pipeline

Imagine going to prison as a 16-year-old.

Now imagine the prison you are going to is the notorious San Quentin Maximum Security Prison in California.

Finally, imagine going to San Quentin as a 16-year-old (the youngest inmate there, ever!) having only been in this country for four years and having only minimal command of the English language.

That is the experience Eddy Zheng, the Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus' guest speaker, shared as part of the API observance.

Incarcerated in San Quentin for 20 years, Zheng – sentenced to life in prison with the possibility for parole for home invasion, kidnapping, and robbery – emerged a much different man than the adolescent who entered the correctional system.

“Education saved my life in the prison system,” Zheng told the gathering. “Not because it was provided to me by the prison but because my peers in there provided me with this learning.”

It was while earning his General Education Diploma (GED) and an associate's degree in San Quentin that Zhang had an epiphany: “Why am I learning about everyone else's history but they're not learning about my cultural history?”

It was fitting, Zheng himself acknowledged, that he addressed the NEA Board only minutes after the Board voted to transmit a policy statement on the “School to Prison Pipeline” to the Representative Assembly for its consideration. For here is another sort of pipeline for immigrants such as himself: School to Prison to Deportation (due to 1996's



ZHENG

Illegal Immigration Reform & Immigration Responsibility Act).

“Immigrants are faced with a language barrier, cultural differences, and a generation gap,” he said. “We often times don't find ourselves being nurtured and supported, and we fall into the pipeline.”

Zheng said this gap only widens in the prison population where immigrants such as him were lumped into the “other” category by fellow prisoners because he didn't conform to one of the primary groups.”

He admitted that for much of the time he was incarcerated his family did not acknowledge his imprisonment to even his grandparents because of the shame it would bring the family.

“I was invisible in my own community,” Zheng said. “And then I became invisible in prison because I was part of the ‘other’.”

It is for these reasons Zheng, who emigrated to the U.S. from China as a 12-year-old with his parents, began to understand he would not be free physically until he was free mentally.

Zheng challenged the NEA's membership before he stepped away from the dais.

“You are the defenders, the healers, and the saviors of generations to come,” he said. “The county and the future of America depends on you.”

NEA Vice-President Becky Pringle concurred: “Every new day is a new day for us to step up to our responsibility. Thank you for reminding us how important public education is in this country and it is at the core of our Democracy.”

Zheng, whose story has been chronicled in the forthcoming documentary: [Breathin': The Eddy Zheng Story](#), was given a full pardon by California Gov. Jerry Brown last year.

## STPP: Report

(Continued from page 1)

the 74-page report to life.

Black students are suspended at a rate more than three times higher than white students. Latino and Native American students are also suspended at much higher rates. And if the minority students are ELL or disabled the rates go higher.

LGBTQ students also suffer. Some 13-15 percent of youths in the juvenile justice system identify as LGBTQ even though they make up only 5-7 percent of the population.

“Unfair discipline practices and student push out are part of the New Jim Crow and contribute to societal ills, including mass incarceration,” according to the report.

Although there is plenty of blame for American society to share in this problem, the committee did not shy away from shining a light on educators.

“As a result of the highly subjective nature of school discipline systems, suspension rates appear to be determined less by the actual behavior of students than by the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and administrators,” according to the report.

And though it may be tempting to dismiss the high rate of discipline on poverty, the com-

mittee rejected that. “The shocking disparities in school discipline rates recounted at the outset of this report are not due to poverty or different rates of misbehavior,” they said.

The committee also provided its best answer as to where the over-discipline starts. Zero-tolerance policies lead to overuse of suspension and expulsion, they said. “The result of this national focus on ‘zero tolerance’ showed up in strict school discipline codes, which criminalize student behaviors that are still viewed as ‘children being children’ when perpetrated by white students,” according to the report.

The environment also plays a role. Increases in policing and surveillance, and even windows with bars, create “prison-like environments” within schools.

“The actions that we take in our classrooms and our buildings may push kids out of schools and put them in direct contact with law enforcement,” Gilbert said.

America has nearly 50 million students and suspends over 3 million each year. Of those, more than 100,000 are expelled. And 95 percent of the suspensions and expulsions are for minor infractions, Gilbert said.

The 2015 Representative Assembly passed NBI B calling for NEA to make a concerted effort to end institutional racism. Gilbert, working with the 19 members of the committee along with support from NEA staff, spent the past nine months researching.

Their report is available for all NEA mem-

bers to read. They also have drafted a Policy Statement to be considered by the 2016 Representative Assembly. The Policy Statement would further define NEA's position on the school to prison pipeline as well as call for the association to do more to eliminate it.

The committee recommends five guiding principles to drive NEA's work in this area: “(1) Eliminating disparities in discipline practices, (2) Creating a supportive and nurturing school climate, (3) Professional training and development, (4) Partnerships and community engagement, and (5) Student and family engagement.”

NEA Executive Director John Stocks said, “This is the most important thing that we have embarked upon in a long, long time.”

Stocks told his personal story as an example of how he is focused on the issue. Because I'm privileged and white, I have not been historically aware of institutional racism,” he said.

When Stocks began working for NEA as a government relations staffer in Wisconsin, he said he felt like a “warrior” for NEA members.

“About three years in, the association wanted to pass a law that allowed any educator in the classroom to send a kid to the office for 24 hours and the principal could not put that student back,” Stocks said. “It haunts me to this day that the passage of that law may be contributing to the school to prison pipeline in a very real way.”

