

# THE DETROIT teacher

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## Right to Work is Wrong for Michigan





# RIGHT TO WORK GOAL?

## *Silencing the Working Class*

**G**ov. Rick Snyder rationalized signing the so-called "Right to Work" law, saying it was pro-worker. What a joke. What a lie!

This law has one underlying yet obvious purpose; to eliminate the voice of organized workers in Michigan by bankrupting the unions that advocate for their rights, benefits, and working conditions.

### President's Report



**Keith  
Johnson**

This bill had nothing to do with giving workers a choice to join a union. They already have that choice. This was to discourage workers from joining unions or paying the "service fees" if they chose not to become a member. Yet they still will reap the benefit of protection and representation by the union that negotiates their collective bargaining agreements and represents them if accused of violating company policies or work rules.

The gutless wonders in our state legislature bum-rushed this legislation down our throats during the "lame-duck" session without allowing for committee hearings or public debate because they were on a mission to silence working families.

They are banking that enough union members will decide not to remain in their unions, knowing those unions must still represent them whether they are a member or not. This is a foolish as-

sumption of our enemies (yes I view them as enemies).

I, along with other union leaders, have a deep and abiding faith in our members' collective belief in the viability of a strong labor movement. I have a deep and abiding respect for what unionism has done for working class America for more than seven decades.

That said, we cannot take that allegiance for granted. We must reach out and remind all of organized labor why we exist. We must remind our memberships what our working conditions will become without the strength and vitality of strong unions.

We must remind management of what we have been able to accomplish when we work collaboratively and unselfishly. Management needs to understand that what is good for the worker is also good for the employer.

Ask the CEOs of Chrysler and General Motors where they would be without the collaborative spirit they enjoyed with the UAW when these companies were on the verge of collapsing along with the American economy.

Working Americans are depending on us in Michigan to rise up and overturn this vindictive act by these Republicans who consistently demonstrate their contempt for working class Americans. These Republicans fear our ability to organize, raise funds, and elect candidates to defeat their attack on working class Americans.

They blame the labor movement for the Right to (not) Work legislation because of our Proposal 2 campaign. They forget that Proposal 2 WOULD NOT have been necessary had THEY not attacked collective bargaining, had THEY not attempted to outlaw auto-

matic dues deduction, had THEY not eliminated just cause and due process rights and made the standard for termination arbitrary and capricious.

It is easy to say "I've never had to call on the union, so why should I have to pay union dues?" We don't regularly have accidents, yet we regularly pay for auto insurance IN CASE WE HAVE ONE! We don't plan on dying suddenly, yet we pay for life insurance IN CASE WE DIE SUDDENLY!

We must remind people that the reason they don't have problems is because those battles were already fought and won so they wouldn't have to fight them again. Being in a union doesn't mean we don't encounter setbacks; but when we do, we regroup, reload, and re-engage until victory is achieved.

Our rise to prominence did not come overnight, and I'll be damned if our demise will either.

One of Billy Joel's most popular songs is "WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE!" Well, this fire, the one that rages in the name of freedom, justice, and the rights of the working class will burn until the enemies of that freedom, justice and the rights of the working class are defeated.

SET YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER 2014 or sooner!



# Keep the Guns Away from Schools

By Edna Reave  
DFT Executive Vice President

Who would have thought we would be discussing let alone entertaining the idea of educators carrying guns to school or visitors permitted to bring a gun into a school? The thought sends chills to my skin. Yet this has been the hot topic on many radio and television shows, blogs and Facebook debates.



Edna Reaves

All too often we in Detroit have to deal with the loss of a school age child who was robbed of life in a gun incident. At the close of 2012, Detroit had over 375 homicides largely due to gun use, up 12.3 percent from 2011. How many of those deaths were school age children?

On the heels of the Sandy Hook massacre, how many more children have to die before something is seriously done about guns on our streets? Someone tweeted a very profound statement that stuck in my mind, "The shoe bomber was on one plane, one time, and now everyone has to take their shoes off at the airport before boarding a plane. We've had dozens of shootings at schools and universities, yet no major change in the gun laws." What does that say about the concern for children in this society? How many

more lives do we have to lose before serious gun control laws are enacted?

I saw a news story of a parent who hosted her child's birthday party at a gun range. I'm speaking of children between the age of five and 12. The children were firing real weapons. I was appalled. In my opinion, video games and movies have glorified gun use far too much already. Although I don't play video games that advocate violence, it's my understanding that some of these games award higher points for killing women and children. Now parents are training children at birthday parties to use guns? The gun-range owner justified the party by saying it teaches students gun responsibility.

Let's not forget that the Sandy Hook shooter was well trained in gun responsibility. How early do we start? When are students mature enough to understand how to manage mental health and anger management issues? How early can they distinguish between a video and reality? Newtown, Conn. is an upper class suburban community with lots of resources for children. Not so in many neighborhoods in Detroit.

Teachers have a difficult time dealing with fights and other incidents in school. We don't need to make judgments on when to pull out a gun to shoot somebody. What happens to the teacher who pulls a weapon to defend from a shooter and accidentally shoots a child? I am not certain that an armed teacher would have been able to stop the shooter in Newtown. A teacher shouldn't have to be in a position to decide whether to grab a gun and go shooting.

Educators have enough to worry about with student performance and evaluations. Guns should not be one of them. Imagine sitting in a conference with a disgruntled parent and have to concern yourself with whether they are armed or not. That's not what we signed up for in our careers. We need to stop putting guns on our streets, not add them in our schools.

Gov. Rick Snyder and the Republicans rammed unfavorable bills down our throats during the lame-duck session. We educators are very passionate about a number of these bills and have expressed our opinion through protest and writing campaigns. Unfortunately, our voices fell on deaf ears. The governor ignored us on right-to-work and the Emergency Manager Law. He was on the verge of ignoring us on the gun legislation that would have allowed guns in our schools until Dec. 14 when 20 children and six adults were killed in Newtown.

If anything positive has come from such a senseless tragedy, the timing caused Gov. Snyder to pause his pen long enough to be convinced that we need gun free zones such as schools and churches here in Michigan. This is one he got right!

**THE DETROIT** teacher

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# DPS Evaluation System Fails the Test

By Mark O'Keefe  
DFT Controller

While the new DPS evaluation system may meet the requirement of state law, it fails the requirements of common sense. As the following example shows, the DPS system can easily result in one teacher getting a higher score than another teacher whose performance is clearly superior.

Readers of Highlights magazine will remember the characters Goofus and Gallant. We are supposed to emulate the behavior of Gallant and avoid the bad examples set by Goofus. Unfortunately, we work in a district where the evaluation system appears to have been designed by Goofus.



Mark O'Keefe

Let's take the hypothetical example of two teachers, Mr. Goofus and Ms. Gallant, borrowing data from actual evaluations of DPS teachers. Each teacher is graded in four areas with a maximum total score of 100.

## School Contribution: Mr. Goofus

works for a principal who knows that every teacher in her

school does a significant amount of work beyond normal school hours. She gave every teacher in the building 5 points out of 5 for this category. Ms. Gallant was in charge of the yearbook for her school. She took pictures at many school events throughout the year and devoted many extra hours to coordinating yearbook production. Her principal did not ask teachers to remind him of any work they had done above and beyond the ordinary, and gave her zero points.

**Discipline:** Mr. Goofus received a three day suspension for inappropriate behavior on school grounds, after school hours, resulting in a three day suspension. His score was 17 of 20. Ms. Gallant has never received a written or verbal reprimand. Her score was 20 out of 20.

**Attendance:** Mr. Goofus used every sick day he earned for the first 15 years of his employment. Last year, fearing the new evaluation system might penalize him for taking sick days, he had perfect attendance. He came to work with colds and viruses that made students and other teachers sick. He also was not at peak effectiveness for many of those days. Result: 15 out of 15 points for attendance. Ms. Gallant had 150 days in her sick bank

at the start of the year. She missed four days last year. Result: 13 out of 15 points.

**Classroom Observation:** Each teacher is rated highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective in 15 categories, and given an overall score of zero to 3.0. The district lumps these into broad ranges to determine how many points a teacher receives out of a 60 point maximum. For example, any score of 1.9 to 2.8 earns 50 points. Mr. Goofus was rated effective in all 15 categories resulting in 2.0 score and 50 of 60 points. Ms. Gallant was rated highly effective in 13 categories and effective in the other two resulting in a 2.8 score which also yielded 50 of 60 points. Under the DPS system, Ms. Gallant gets the same number of points as Mr. Goofus, in spite of being rated higher on 13 of the 15 areas observed.

**Total score:** Mr. Goofus gets a total score of 87 points, losing 10 points for not having a perfect score on his observation and three for a disciplinary problem. Ms. Gallant gets a total score of 83, in spite of scoring higher than Mr. Goofus on 13 of the 15 areas in the classroom observation. She lost five points for "school contribution" in spite of doing substantial extra work, another four point deduction for proper use of her sick days, and another 10 points on her classroom observation, which was nearly perfect.

A few simple adjustments would go a long way toward making this system fairer.

School contribution points should be awarded after getting written reports from teachers detailing what they have done to earn points in this category.

Teachers should only lose points in the attendance category for being tardy, or for unexcused absences.

Classroom observation scores within a broad range should not be lumped into one group that gets the same score. Each teacher's score of zero to 3.0 should be multiplied by 20 to determine how many of the 60 points they earn in this category.

These simple suggestions would have resulted in a score of 96 for Ms. Gallant and 77 for Mr. Goofus.

Even with these adjustments, the district needs to address different grading curves that individual principals may have, as well as the flawed observation process, and the failure to consider a teacher's long-term record. But at least they would be able to tell the difference between Goofus and Gallant.



# Detroit Teacher Writes Children's Book

Deanna Vanderbilt has journeyed down many paths. She did an eight-year stint in the U.S. Army. She was a library assistant for the Detroit Public Library. She birthed and raised eight children.



**Deanna Vanderbilt is a 12-year Detroit teacher.**

Finally the 55-year-old Priest Elementary School teacher is doing the things she's always wanted to do.

"I always wanted to walk the Mackinac Bridge on Labor Day." She did it. She wanted to be the balloon handler for Miss Piggy in the Detroit Thanksgiving Day Parade. Check.

"I'm just trying to improve myself overall."

Now Vanderbilt is the proud author of a children's book "The Dog with a Thousand Names." The story is based on the song "Bingo" with the farmer and his family changing the dog's name throughout the day. The book, a great teaching tool, uses phonics and rhyming and has a worksheet page. "The Dog with a Thousand Names" is available at authorhouse.com and on Amazon.

"I've accomplished something years ago I couldn't see myself doing," Vanderbilt says. "It's a dream come true."

## WSU Volleyball Players Visit DSA



**WSU's Madie Kent gives volleyball hints to a DSA student.**

Physical Education teacher Dimitri Demetral made a cold call to the Wayne State University women's volleyball champs. After hearing about the team's second place win, he asked if they might give his Detroit School of Arts students a starter course on the sport.

The WSU Warriors visited not once but several times to work with the students on foot placement, passing and properly hitting the ball.

"They have a full ride scholarship because of their skills," Demetral said as he introduced WSU players Nicole Arends, 20; Madie Kent, 21; and Kristen Bulkiew, 20. "They don't pay tuition, or food or room and board. You can do that too."

The WSU athletes practice five days a week, two hours a day. They started playing as young as eight. But the fun sport paid these players great rewards.

# THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

## SASI:

## Keep On Giving

Current and retired attendance officers for Detroit schools held a Christmas celebration Dec. 12 at the Redford Presbyterian Villages for their organization – the Student Assistance Services, Incorporated. SASI was established in 1953 by Detroit Public School attendance officers to help students stay in school.

Since its inception six decades ago, SASI has aided more than 200,000 Detroit children. It provides needy students with material necessities to enable them to attend school regularly and participate in school programs. It gives clothing, shoes, glasses, and the repair of hearing aids so students can quickly return to school after an emergency.

"Times are tough in Detroit," said Kathy Cornish, the SASI Board of Directors chair. "We're willing and able to help."



**SASI Yeam: (from left) Kathy Y. Cornish, Sophie Skoney, Jefferey Kilgore, Jacquelyn Bundy and Lisa Cornish Austin, (second row) Carnette Johnson, Sandra Rucker, Brent Ausgood, and Daniel Skoney, (standing) George Adams, Lulabea Jones, Kisa Henderson, Gerry Harris, Marquette Sims, Ronald Cornish, Angelique Jones, and Harold Harris. Members not pictured are Costella Winbush, George Eason, Grady Jones Jr. and Criscilla Levingston.**

# Rallying for a Voice

A group of 30 Detroiters rallied at the Spirit of Detroit at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Building on Dec. 10 to have a say in their future. They spoke up for deaf students and other children in Detroit whose voices have been silenced by the closing of the Day School for the Deaf and other schools.

"We're opposed to the privatization of water and the school system," said one protester.

Elena Herrada, a Detroit Board of Education member, said the protesters were seeking federal intervention over the takeover of the city, schools and citizens right to govern.

"We have something going on that's worse than voter suppression," said LaMar Lemmons. "It's voter usurpation." Lemmons said despite the defeat of PA4, Roy Roberts remained in his po-



sition as Emergency Manager a month after voters voided the law.

Lemmons said the real concern is turning a profit on urban youth.

"No expense will be spared to keep them in the school to prison pipeline," he said.

Brooke Harris, who taught at Mumford this year when it turned into a for-profit charter, said the school has oversized classes and the needs of its special educa-

tion students are not being met.

Annebel Duncan, the daughter of deaf parents, was protesting the closing of Day School for the Deaf.

"I believe what they've done to move those kids out of that school was not only unconscionable but unethical," she said. "They have a right to have an education. They're not even being educated in a deaf culture. They have not even tried to learn more about their students."

## Cesar Chavez Academy Calls for Union Vote

Teachers and parents at the Cesar Chavez Academy rallied Dec. 20 outside of the southwest Detroit school after officially filing for a union election to be represented by the Michigan Alliance of Charter Teachers & Staff, which is affiliated with the AFT and AFL-CIO.

"We're here to send a message that we want what's best for Detroit's kids," said Florde-maria Garay, a social worker at the school for 10 years. "We're in this together. I've been a social worker for nearly two decades and realize the impact we have by giving a voice to educators and parents. We are forming a union so we have a voice in making sure we have a school culture that will support our students."

Employees at Cesar Chavez have been working to organize since 2006. Their initial attempts were tied up in legal delays by the for-profit company that runs the charter school, the Leona



Group LLC. Parents say they support educators' efforts to join a union and hope the Leona Group does not attempt to block the process.

The parents also have organized a group, "Mujeres Mejorando Educacion," which translates to "Women Improving Education."

"By standing by the teachers, we are standing by our kids," said Karina Lopez, who has a third-grader at the Martin Street campus. "I'm disappointed that as a parent my voice falls on

deaf ears. It's time to change that. I want a role and a voice in shaping my son's education."

Gov. Rick Snyder recently signed so-called "Right to Work" legislation, saying the bills are about giving workers in Michigan choice. Teachers are calling on him to back up this statement by supporting their efforts to choose a union.



# Grants . . .

## Earth Science

The National Association of Geoscience Teachers sponsors an annual award to recognize the most outstanding earth science teachers in various regions in the U.S. The award has existed for more than 40 years and identifies and rewards excellence in teaching. Grants of \$500 to travel to a GTA meeting and \$500 for classroom improvement and more are available. Deadline: spring. For info, visit [wheelergr@csus.edu](mailto:wheelergr@csus.edu).

## Reading Grant

The American Association of School Librarians is accepting applications for its Innovative Reading Grant. The purpose of the \$2,500 grant is to support the planning and implementation of a program for children that motivates and encourages reading, especially with struggling readers. Deadline: Feb. 1, 2013. For info, visit [www.ala.org/aasl/aaslawards/innovativereadinggrant/aaslreading](http://www.ala.org/aasl/aaslawards/innovativereadinggrant/aaslreading).

## U.S. Constitution

The James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation is accepting applications for fellowships from those who wish to become outstanding teachers of the American Constitution at the secondary school level. Grants up to \$24,000 will be awarded to one qualified applicant from each state. Deadline: March 1, 2013. For info, visit [www.act.org/madison](http://www.act.org/madison).

## Hunger

The Sodexo Foundation and Youth Service America asks young people in the U.S. to take hunger personally and take action to alleviate hunger. The foundation offers \$500 grants for service projects that address hunger. Deadline: Jan. 31, 2013. For info, visit [amcdonald@ysa.org](mailto:amcdonald@ysa.org).

## Intellectual Freedom

The American Association of School Librarians offers the Intellectual Freedom Award for a librarian who has upheld the principles of intellectual freedom. Grants of up to \$2,000 are available. Must be a current AASL member. Deadline: Feb. 1, 2013. For info, visit [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).

## Fruit Trees

Fruit Tree 101 is an initiative of the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation with support from Stretch Island Fruit Company. The purpose of grants of fruit trees to schools is to improve health and environment while educating children about the benefits of fruit trees. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [info@ftpf.org](mailto:info@ftpf.org).

## Librarians and Teachers

The American Association of School Librarians honors collaborative efforts between a school librarian and a teacher or teachers. A \$2,500 award recognizes and encourages such collaborations. Deadline: Feb. 1, 2013. For info, visit [www.ala.org/aasl](http://www.ala.org/aasl).

## Space

NASA's annual Space Settlement Contest invites students in K-12 to submit their entries envisioning a space settlement where people could live. The contest is sponsored by NASA Ames and the National Space Society. Prizes up to \$5,000 are available. Deadline: March 15, 2013. For info, visit <http://settlement.arc.nasa.gov/Contest>.



## MSU Students Visit Davison

Michigan State University students visited Davison Nov. 30 to work with first- and third-graders in a variety of science and environmental projects. They made collages and performed experiments. The MSU students are part of Destination Detroit, a ground breaking initiative at MSU focused on building bridges among diverse student groups through meaningful service work that engages the youth of Detroit.



# Gifts Galore at A. L. Holmes

On Dec. 19, Santa Claus, played by Tom De-newith, a retired L'Anse Creuse North High School principal, visited all three preschool classrooms at A.L. Holmes School. Santa read the children a book about Santa and his reindeer and gave candy canes after listening to each child tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas.



Then Santa's elves, played by the good people of Chase Bank of Troy, showered the kids with gifts. The beautifully wrapped gifts were individually selected by Chase staff members. Before the elves arrived, they had been given individual lists of sizes and toy preferences that the Chase elves used to personally shop for each child.

The parents of the preschoolers were in disbelief and many were crying as the excitement of the children stirred in the classroom when the elves appeared. The children received coats, hats, gloves, outfits, underwear, socks and toys. When Principal Leenet Campbell-Williams stopped by the classroom, she was dumbfounded with the amount of gifts Chase Bank had bought for each child.

Preschool teacher Theresa Boyce worked diligently with Jennifer Rinke, Chase Bank supervisor beginning in early November to ensure that the children at A.L. Holmes were treated to a Merry Christmas. Lots of planning and hours of preparation enabled the two friends to make this a moment not to forget.



We're on **Facebook!**

Check us out at [www.facebook.com/DFT231](http://www.facebook.com/DFT231)



# Teachers Stand Up for Themselves at Evaluation Appeals

By Terrence Martin  
DFT Labor Relations Administrator

The attacks on public school teachers over the past few years have been well documented. A faction of people think teachers are ineffective and undeserving of a voice in the work place. Teachers have been undervalued and treated as if our expertise is insignificant.



Terrence Martin

In December Detroit teachers appealed their evaluation scores to a three person panel made up of a Human Resource representative, general counsel, and a school principal. While many may consider this process demeaning and offensive, it is necessary for the DFT to move forward with its lawsuit.

You can only imagine how awful this has made many of our members feel especially when they were prohibited from having a union representative speak on their behalf. We have re-

ceived the calls and maintain that the DFT will be vindicated in court while this unpleasant process continues.

It would be easy for our members to disregard this appeal, but they did not. It would have been easy for our members to complain about how unjustly they were treated last year by their principal, but they did not. It would have been easy for our members to make excuses as to why their scoring was insufficient according to DPS standards but that wasn't the case. Teachers were passionate about their profession and the services they deliver to their students.

What our members have done is provide the panel with comprehensive portfolios of their work as DPS teachers throughout their careers. Teachers provided evidence of their professional development trainings, extra-curricular work, and many special projects. In addition, our members came prepared with copies of standardized test scores indicating the growth in student achievement under their tutelage.

I am truly proud of our DFT members as they endured this process. The knowledge base, hard work, and integrity our teachers displayed reaffirms what I always knew: Detroit has the most talented educators in Michigan.

The DFT will continue to fight alongside of you.

In Solidarity.

## DFT Member Takes Legislator to Task

Dear Rep. Kurt Heise,

My wife, Elizabeth Poterala, sent you an e-mail message regarding the Right to Work issue, and she forwarded me your reply. The words that stand out in your reply are "I followed his lead...." A Democratic state legislator told me that the new crop of Republican lawmakers are basically acting as a rubber stamp for anything that Gov. Snyder proposes, and your statement seems to bear this out.

My father, mother-in-law, wife, and I are proud union members. I am a member of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO Local 231. Our late President Mary Ellen Riordan gained for us bargaining rights with the Detroit Board of Education in 1964. She had a hand in writing many of the provisions of the retirement plan legislation, which provides the post-teaching-career benefits we have today.

Some of the newscasters on TV yesterday expressed shock that right-to-work legislation would pass in Michigan and rightly so. The headline in Sunday's "Free Press" states in big bold letters "A Failure of Leadership." One of my friends posted on Facebook that she was so fed up with the Michigan Republicans that she joined the Democratic party today after being an independent all her life, and she is a septuagenarian like myself.

I understand that efforts are under way to overturn the disastrous events of yesterday. I pray to God – for the future of the middle class in Michigan – that this does occur.

The more I read your reply to my wife the more it looks like it came from a reply template supplied by the Governor's office, where each Republican legislator merely had to fill in some blanks to make it appear as though it actually originated in his or her office.

"I followed his lead....." My God; don't you have any backbone?!

Sincerely,  
Your tax-paying and voting constituent,  
**Michael S. Poterala**

## Calendar

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

### January

- 15 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
- 17 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 21 Schools closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

### February

- 7 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 18-22 Schools closed, Winter Break**
- 19 Retirees Chapter, 11:30 a.m.**