



## **ARE YOU READY? YOUR UNION'S CALL TO ACTION!**



### **The Time is Now: Going on Offense to Defend Our Gains**

On November 9, 2016, the United States of America awoke to a new political reality. A reality in which the Republican Party now controls the Presidency and both chambers of Congress. A reality in which the Republican Party also gained or maintained control of all branches of many state governments. A reality in which the likelihood of the U.S. Supreme Court becoming extremely conservative as new justices are appointed is all too real. A reality in which fair share, collective bargaining, and all the basic principles of unionism are, and will continue to be, under attack for the foreseeable future.

This new political reality mandates that NEA and its state affiliates actively engage in planning and preparing for a post-fair share fee, anti-union environment. NSO brothers and sisters across the country can grasp this new reality as an opportunity to **go on offense** and pursue an agenda that will move their NEA affiliate in the right direction. It is essential that staff not be shut out of the conversations being had. **We** are the conduit between the local members and the state organization. **How can you and your affiliate make this a reality?**

Many NSO locals have a Labor-Management Committee (or something similar) in their contracts. While this forum can be a venue to begin conversations, it often lacks the focus to address larger organizational concerns and most ignore a key player in making organizational change: **GOVERNANCE**. Several NSO affiliates have addressed these problems by creating a separate standing committee whose sole purpose is to **create organizational change**. An example of such a committee is below:

#### **Strategic Practices Committee**

“There shall be a standing committee of six (6) members each of Union, Management and Governance, to review current practices, both internal and external, and to recommend strategic approaches to meet the mission, vision, and values of \_\_\_\_\_ EA from an organizing perspective. The committee will be formed within 30 days of ratification of the tentative agreement by both parties. Recommendations of the committee will be ongoing. Other stakeholders identified by the committee may be added by consensus.”

We have a great opportunity to help our state and local NEA affiliates (RTW *or* FSF) create real, positive change within their organizations. A willingness by NSO affiliates to actively engage in conversation and positive action focused on **member engagement** and **organizational effectiveness** may be the best offense against the political and judicial foes we currently face.

### **But a Strong Defense Helps Keep Our Offense on the Field**

Currently, and for the foreseeable future, NSO members will find our staff unions under assault as NEA and state affiliates attempt to restructure in the face of threats to fair share, collective bargaining, loss of payroll deduction, and a host of other union rights and new mandates intended to eliminate unions, (such as annual certification requirements). Change may well be necessary, but we need to

make sure we are equal participants in creating that change. To protect and strengthen our staff unions, we need to take the following steps:

### **1. Maintain Unity and Educate Your Staff Union Members:**

Create meaningful opportunities for member engagement, education, feedback, and leadership; build a culture of transparent, participatory democracy.

Make sure your members know the threats they face--internally *and* externally--and that the way to face them is by standing together. Don't let despair rule the day!

Review your union code of conduct. **Solidarity** is our strength, not individual relationships with management, which can change at any moment.

### **2. Strengthen Your Contract Language:**

Strengthen your Seniority and RIF language, as well as your language around Transfers and Reassignments. Don't let managers use these crises to pick and choose staff, allowing them to reshape your union in their image. Make sure processes are clear, well-defined, and **based on seniority**. Keep management's ability to RIF, Transfer, or Reassign narrow in scope.

Make sure you have strong language to limit Subcontracting/Outsourcing and the use of temporary employees. Don't let them create a scab work force. That takes work away from your staff union and costs member jobs.

### **3. Make Sure Your Staff Union Crisis Funds are Adequate.**

Do you have a special crisis fund assessment and fund governance structure set in your bylaws? Is that assessment adequate to supplement member incomes in the event of a strike or lockout?

### **4. And lastly, Don't Let Your Employer Claim Financial Distress Without Proof!**

Go over your employer's finances:

- Secure copies of recent audits.
- Determine reserve fund balances.
- Go over membership trends over the last 5 years.
- Find your Pension's Funding Ratio (asset vs. liabilities).
- Look over prior year surpluses and losses (deficits).

**Only if we are strong, only if management respects us, can we move forward as an equal partner for what lies ahead.**

