American Federation of Teachers New Jersey State Federation
2017 New Jersey Legislator Survey

Directions: Please place an “X” in the box that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Feel free to comment on any statement.

Section 1: Pre-Kindergarten – 12 Questions

1. Issue: Universal Pre-K/Full Day Kindergarten: The positive impact of high-quality early childhood programs on children’s success in school and their future has been well documented. Many studies have demonstrated the importance of the early years for brain development. High-quality programs provide children with secure and caring relationships with educators and caregivers, stimulating learning opportunities, and experiences that prepare them for the later school years.

I support a role for state and municipal governments in facilitating and leveraging funding for universal access to non-compulsory early childhood education and care programs for children from birth to age five.

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment: I support prioritizing funding to be able to make full-day Kindergarten available for kindergarten aged children.

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

Between 2013 and 2016, I worked closely with a Head Start program in Montclair, volunteering in the classroom and supporting Art Start, an enrichment program that made it possible for children to visit the local Art Museum. It also provided arts training for teachers and training for parents.

Comment:

2. Issue: All students need a rich, well-rounded curriculum. Students cannot become the thinkers, inventors and leaders of tomorrow if we only teach them how to fill in bubbles on multiple-choice tests. Our curriculum must match our hopes for the next generation, and should equip all children with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to lead successful, meaningful lives.

I support a vision for public education that includes funding for a rich, well rounded curriculum (including performing/fine arts, physical education, library...) with staff and material support to educate the whole student.

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree
Comment: I am a member of the Visiting Committee of Harvard's Graduate School of Education and have introduced Harvard's Lectio program to the Montclair Public School system to provide quality education experiences outside the classroom.

3. Issue: Focus on student learning, not test and punish. Our nation's public school students, along with their parents, communities, teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees, have been forced to live under test-and-punish policies that include sanctions and school closings, high-stakes assessments, and federalized teacher evaluations that are counterproductive and have taken the joy out of teaching and learning.

A. I believe that high-stakes standardized testing is too pervasive in public schools

☐ Strongly Agree ☒ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

B. I support a three year, statewide moratorium on all punitive aspects related to standardized tests, to allow time and resources to thoroughly vet standards and appropriate time for professional learning.

☐ Strongly Agree ☒ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

C. I support the right of parents to opt their children out of standardized tests without fear of penalty for their children or their school.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:
My younger daughter recently graduated from Montclair High School. We opted out of PARCC.

D. I support efforts to increase DOE transparency when it comes to standardized testing, including requiring them to publish a report detailing the amount of testing required by the state and how it plans to use and share the data.
E. **Student performance on standardized tests should not be the main factor in teacher assessments.** As legislated by NJTEACH, which established a mechanism to remove ineffective teachers, assessments should be based on multiple measures and teachers given peer mentoring and an opportunity to improve if they are rated less than effective. Tenure must be safeguarded to protect teaching from being politicized and experienced teachers should be retained even in the event of layoffs based on established seniority measures.

Comment: It is vital that teaching positions not be politicized, however, tenure should not be used to defeat the goals of NJTEACH.

4. **Issue: Privatization of Public Schools: Charter School Accountability and Vouchers:**
   The explosion of charters and school vouchers has drained resources from children, forced the closing of neighborhood schools and destabilized districts and communities. All too often these "reforms" are used to destabilize the traditional public school system for profit and power.

   A. **I support a statewide moratorium on charter school expansion for three years in order to study their impact and develop the oversight, accountability and transparency standards necessary to best serve our students, families and communities.**

Comment: I am a strong supporter of public schools. Two of my children are public school teachers. I believe that we need to continue to study the effects of charter schools on inequality and segregation and they must be held accountable to the same standards as non-charter schools. I believe that charter schools can add value in some circumstances, but that more work has to be done to provide systems of oversight.

   B. **Charter schools often open in communities against the will of parents and residents. I support legislation that requires a majority vote of a town’s residents before opening a new charter school in that community.**
Comment:

C. I support efforts to require charter schools to publish and pass a community vote of their budgets similar to district run public schools.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

D. I oppose vouchers and/or other proposals that allow taxpayer dollars to be used for private and religious schools, either as a limited experiment or as a full scale program.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

Section 2: Higher Education Questions

5. **Issue: HE Administrative Accountability** - Management abuses in public Higher Education in New Jersey are well documented (e.g. fiscal mismanagement, no bid contracts, excessive executive compensation packages, including loan forgiveness, lack of accountability, increased spending on facilities and athletic programs rather than academics and student support.)

Existing Law: P.L. 2009, c.308

A. I support increased oversight of State College and University Boards of Trustees.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment: As a member of Harvard’s Board of Overseers, I am sensitive to the need of effective oversight and am aware of the risks that may occur in its absence.

B. I support having governing boards of the State colleges and universities include
faculty appointments recommended by independent faculty governance organizations

☐ Strongly Agree ☑ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

C. I support a State-wide salary guide for State University and College managers.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

D. I support college and university term bills itemizing all expenses.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

E. I support college and universities reporting back to students annually regarding how tuition and mandatory fees were spent.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

6. Issue: Higher Education Funding - The proposed state higher education budget for 2017 is approximately the same as this year and 7 percent lower than in 2015. When adjusted for inflation, New Jersey’s higher education spending thus remains 23 percent below 2008 levels. State colleges and universities have increased tuition and fees significantly to compensate for this decline in state support and some state schools are now the most expensive in the nation. In addition, unlike most states, New Jersey has no capital budget for Higher Education. Appropriate budgeting is necessary for student support that ultimately results in student success. Statistics indicate that EOF students, a cohort provided consistent academic monitoring and mentoring, have the highest graduation rates.

A. I only support bonding initiatives that are revenue neutral for students and taxpayers.
B. I support State increases in annual appropriation to every State College and University.

☐ Strongly Agree ☒ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment: We must do more to drive down the costs of college education in the state. Increases in the annual appropriation are one means to do so. Taking steps to reduce cost and more closely monitor budgets are also a vital tool.

C. I support the State investing more funds in the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) in order to maximize student success.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

7. **Issue:** There is currently a Senate Bill (S-2643) that will alter the long-standing, differential missions of community colleges and universities in New Jersey. This Bill will permit students to attend community colleges for three years and then transfer in the final year to a four-year institution and receive a degree from that college/university.

I support maintaining the differential missions of the community colleges and the four-year colleges/universities.

☐ Strongly Agree ☒ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

8. **Issue: Tenure Safeguards Academic Freedom.** In Higher Education, tenure was established to protect academic freedom. Every New Jersey State college and university has a labor and management negotiated agreement that establishes accountability and provides for assessment of tenured faculty through self-evaluation regarding teaching, scholarship and service, and peer and student evaluations reviewed by respective departments and college deans.

I support the existing assessment procedures (e.g. student, peer, department, and respective college/university dean review) regarding tenured faculty in the State of New Jersey.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

9. **Issue:** Equity Pay for Adjuncts - During winter and summer sessions while work hours and requirements are the same, there is a discrepancy in pay between full-time/part-time faculty and staff, and the adjunct faculty.

I support equal pay for equal work.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

10. **Issue:** Adjunct faculty are currently hired on a semester by semester basis, but are ineligible to collect Unemployment Insurance in the summer because of a Federal regulation which any new State legislation alone cannot remedy.

I support exempting adjunct faculty from paying unemployment insurance unless they are eligible to collect.

☑ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:
Section 3: Protecting Working Families

11. Issue: Retirement Justice – Some state and local officials unfairly blame the cost of public pensions as the source of budget shortfalls. There is no denying the recession affected pension funding, but in New Jersey there is a long history of the state failing to make payment into the pension system. The impact of eliminating or reducing the defined benefit pension would be devastating for the one-quarter of all state and local public workers who are not covered by Social Security, leaving their pension benefits as their major source of retirement income.

Existing Law: P.L. 2011, c.78

A. I support a FY 18 budget payment to the pension system in the amount of 2.4 Billion as agreed to and outlined in chapter 78.

☐ Strongly Agree      ☑ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

B. I would oppose any efforts to eliminate defined-benefit pension plans.

☑ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

C. I support efforts to continue to reduce the percentage of public employee retirement funds invested in risky hedge fund accounts with their high fees and low returns.

☐ Strongly Agree  ☑ Agree  ☐ Don’t Know  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

12. Issue: Public Employee Healthcare Contributions - The Pension and Health Benefits Reform Act of 2011, stripped healthcare as a bargaining right from public employees and imposed healthcare costs that saw average contributions skyrocket for public employees. At the same
time, many public workers saw low increase in pay, resulting in multiple years of declining take home pay.

Since the sunset of chapter 78 has returned the negotiation of healthcare costs to the collective bargaining process, I support a bargaining position that allows for lowering and/or capping the percentage of public employees’ contributions to healthcare.

☐ Strongly Agree ☒ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment: Separate from the collective bargaining process, I will work to lower healthcare costs for all by attacking the high cost of prescription drugs and cutting duplicative and wasteful care. That way, we can lower the total cost in addition to negotiating the percentage that public employees pay.

13. Issue: “Right-to-Work” is Wrong for Workers. Given current Republican control of our federal government, in the coming years we are likely to see efforts to pass federal “Right-to-Work” (RTW) legislation that undermines workers’ rights, union strength and the collective bargaining process. Right now, either private or public employers and employees can freely negotiate to make sure everyone who benefits from a union contract pays their fair share of the costs of obtaining and protecting those benefits. Despite its misleading name, RTW law does not guarantee anyone a job and it does not protect against unfair firing. It only weakens collective bargaining rights and limits workers’ freedom to demand respect, fair pay and safety on the job.

A. I would support State legislation that preserves the fair representation fee for unionized workers should adverse Federal legislation or a Supreme Court decision pass that seeks to eliminate union representation fees.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

B. Efforts to pass legislation (in this case a misnamed “right to Work” initiative which might be called “Paycheck Deception” making it illegal to have union dues automatically deducted from employee paychecks is designed to divert union resources away from representing workers and toward becoming bill collectors. I would oppose any efforts at the state level to limit automatic union dues deduction or make it illegal.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:
14. Issue: Privatization/Tax Fairness - Because of chronic underfunding, many of our public schools, hospitals, services and programs have been forced to reduce desperately needed services, privatize or close altogether. This has come at a time when corporate profits are at record highs and workers’ stagnant wages are near record lows when calculated for actual purchasing power. Privatization hurts our communities via a decrease in valuable services, layoffs and wage/benefit reductions.

A. I support looking at creative ways to prioritize the use of existing local tax revenues to maintain valuable public institutions, services and programs.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Comment:

B. Five times now, the New Jersey State Legislature has passed a Millionaire’s Tax to address our lagging economy and bring needed revenue into the state budget. Despite overwhelming public support for a Millionaire’s Tax, each time Governor Christie has vetoed the effort. I would support reinstating a true Millionaire’s tax on income over $1 million dollars.

☒ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Don’t Know ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree