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Illinois Teachers' Union Takes Historic Step to Decertify from State and National Union

Local teachers stand firm on decision despite union harassment and threats

Alexandria, VA—Teachers in southern Illinois overwhelmingly voted last week to decertify their state and national union, the first local union to do so in the state. The Century Education Association (CEA), representing Century School District in Ullin, IL, voted to become a “local-only” union, freeing the teachers of membership with both the Illinois Education Association (IEA) and the National Education Association (NEA).

The vote came after the members of CEA determined that they were no longer happy with the representation and services they were receiving from IEA. After an initial vote in November, the teachers in the local association were subsequently harassed by the IEA, being told falsely that they would lose their current contracts if they were to decertify.

“We really felt that the IEA and the NEA were not organizations out to represent the best interests of teachers,” said Debra Goins, President of the CEA and a teacher at Century Elementary School. “We all felt we should have the right to choose to affiliate or not, without being harassed, bullied, lied to and intimidated.”

The vote on Thursday made official CEA’s departure from the IEA and NEA. CEA will now be solely responsible for the collective bargaining for the district. Other benefits previously supplied by the IEA, such as liability coverage, will be provided by the Association of American Educators (AAE).

“We are pleased to assist CEA’s efforts in becoming a local-only organization,” said La Rae Munk, AAE Director of Legal Services. “Teachers should have the right to be self-governed and make their own decisions regarding their employment.”

This decision is the latest in a nationwide movement of teachers away from union affiliation toward a more self-governed approach when it comes to collective bargaining. Teachers in Washington, California, and Iowa, among others, have all chosen either self-representation or local union representation over membership in the state and national unions.

The Association of American Educators is the largest national, non-union, professional educators’ association. AAE seeks to increase the respect and professionalism of teachers, to improve public education through increased accountability and higher student achievement, and to provide educators with a professional alternative to teacher labor unions. AAE believes that teacher labor unions no longer meet the needs of today’s educators. www.aaeteachers.org