



# Commonwealth POLICY BRIEF

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## **Pennsylvania State Education Association: Compelling Teachers, Marginalizing Students, Lobbying Politicians & Increasing Taxes**

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### **Executive Summary**

Originally founded as the Pennsylvania State Teachers Association in 1852, the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) has transformed itself from a professional development organization for educators into one of the wealthiest, largest, and most politically active labor unions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

With more than 185,500 members, an annual income of more than \$84 million through compulsory dues and fee payments and other sources, and 281 full-time employees,<sup>1</sup> the union's success depends on its ability to:

1. Organize employees into collective bargaining units and secure compulsory dues and fees from workers and teachers;
2. Influence legislation and financially support, elect, and lobby elected officials at every level of government; and
3. Secure larger amounts of taxpayer money for the public schools and—ultimately—the union itself.

In the 1980s, Pennsylvania State Education Association membership numbered a mere 80,000. But with the passage of Act 84 of 1988—a law that granted labor unions the power to secure dues or fee payments from employees as a condition of employment—PSEA membership has more than doubled to over 185,500 today. The PSEA's success in organizing teachers, cooks, janitors, bus drivers, and other school and health care personnel has provided the union with the numbers and the wealth to influence public policy in a manner that is virtually unrivaled in Harrisburg.

The PSEA has evolved into a powerful political machine with full and part-time political operatives in the state capital and in 13 regionally positioned offices throughout the Commonwealth.<sup>2</sup> The labor union's extensive network of personnel is able to directly and indirectly influence local, regional, statewide, and national political campaigns through hard and soft dollar contributions totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars. But by completely politicizing public education at every level, the PSEA has effectively marginalized parents, children, and even teachers in communities throughout Pennsylvania.

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Ultimately, the PSEA's health and wealth is based on its success in lobbying elected officials to increase taxes on Pennsylvanians. Because salaries and benefits of public school employees—and, indirectly, union employees—are paid for by taxpayers, the union has a strong incentive to push for higher taxes. To this end, the labor union has been highly effective.

In the years preceding the passage of Act 84 (1968-1987), public school tax revenue from state and local sources grew respectively at rates 27% and 39% above the rate of inflation.<sup>3</sup> However, in the years following Act 84 (1988-2007), public school tax revenue growth from state and local sources outpaced inflation by 56% and 92%, respectively.<sup>4</sup> And during the post-Act 84 time period, property tax increases have grown by an inflation-adjusted 188%, compared to a mere 12% increase in the preceding nineteen years.<sup>5</sup>

Although Pennsylvania teachers receive the fourth highest salaries in the nation (when adjusted for the cost of living), the real beneficiaries of the PSEA's financial and political power are the PSEA staff and officers. In 2006-07, the average salary for a PSEA employee was more than \$82,000. Even more startling, 99 out of 281 employees received more than \$100,000 in salary alone.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the PSEA in organizing employees, influencing politicians, and encouraging tax increases should be a concern for every Pennsylvanian. In addition to profiting from the \$22.9 billion in taxpayer money that is spent annually (as of 2006-07) on public education, the PSEA heavily influences what is legislated in the statehouse and what occurs in our schools.

## **Introduction**

The Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)—founded in 1852 as the Pennsylvania State Teachers Association to promote professional development for educators—is one of the wealthiest, largest, and most politically active labor unions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Rivalled by only a handful of other special interest groups, the school employees' labor union boasts more than 185,500 members, an annual income of more than \$84 million through compulsory payments and other sources, and 281 full-time employees.<sup>7</sup>

The PSEA is currently the exclusive bargaining representative for 900-plus local associations. In addition to public school teachers, the union represents school cooks, janitors, bus drivers, school dental hygienists, school nurses, school psychologists, school social workers, librarians, community college and junior college faculties, students and retirees, as well as private sector healthcare workers.<sup>8</sup> In approximately 600 of the local associations, the PSEA has negotiated with employers—primarily school board members—the power to compel payments from employees as a condition of employment. It is this “taxing” power that has enabled the PSEA to become a dominant force in Pennsylvania politics.

Today, the PSEA's strength in numbers and wealth enables it to effectively advance its agenda on a daily basis. The labor union's success is dependent on its ability to (1) organize employees into collective bargaining units and secure com-

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pulsory dues agreements from school boards; (2) influence legislation by financially supporting, electing, and lobbying officials at every level of government; and (3) secure increasingly larger amounts of taxpayer money for the public schools and—ultimately—the union itself. To date, the PSEA has earned an “A” in all three subjects.

## Compelling Teachers

The Pennsylvania State Education Association relies on a number of special legal privileges granted to the union through the political and legislative process. Among the pillars of legislatively granted union power are compulsory unionism, monopoly bargaining rights, agency shop, agency (fair share) fee payers, dues deduction, maintenance of membership, and work strikes.

In 2007, the union’s ranks boasted 185,527 members. PSEA membership was approximately 80,000 members in the 1980s, but the passage of Act 84 in 1988 rejuvenated the association by granting the union the power to compel dues or fee payments from employees as a condition of employment.

**Compulsory Unionism.** Twenty-two states have a right-to-work law, which means that workers in those states cannot be compelled to join or support a labor union as a prerequisite for employment. Pennsylvania workers do not enjoy such legal protections.<sup>9</sup>

Act 84 of 1988 provided labor unions with the power to compel employees to pay dues or fees to a union as a condition of employment. For teachers working in a PSEA-organized school district, this means they must pay the union hundreds of dollars whether or not they want union representation.

**Monopoly Bargaining Rights.** Pennsylvania state laws grant unions monopoly bargaining rights, which prevent employees in unionized workplaces from being represented by themselves or even another labor union.

**Agency Shops.** School districts in Pennsylvania are classified as either “agency shop” or “open shop” districts. In open shops, school employees have the option of joining the union. School employees in agency shops, however, are forced to join or pay fees to the local union in order to keep their jobs.

These “agency shops”—whereby school board directors agree to a union contract that forces every teacher to pay money to the union in order to enter and remain in a classroom—have increased from zero school districts in 1987 to 348 out of 501 districts statewide in 2006. Although one-third of Pennsylvania’s school districts do not force their employees to make payments to a labor union, the other two-thirds of agency shops account for nearly 3 out of every 4 teachers in the state.<sup>10</sup>

**Agency or Fair Share Fees.** The labor union bills itself as a “voluntary” membership association, and claims that “No school employee or health care professional is required to join and pay dues, nor can they be fired or be subjected to any punitive action for choosing not to join.”<sup>11</sup>

Nearly 3 out of every 4 teachers in the Commonwealth is compelled to join the local union in order to stay in the classroom.

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The irony, however, is that the PSEA is one of few organizations where non-membership costs hundreds of dollars every year. In the 2007-08 school year, union members paid \$400 to PSEA and an additional \$153 to its national affiliate, the National Education Association (NEA).<sup>12</sup> During that time, teachers who chose not to join the union were forced to pay \$320 each in fees to the PSEA and another \$79.56 to NEA, for representation these teachers did not want.<sup>13</sup>

Employees who do not wish to join the union and work in an agency shop are still forced to forfeit a portion of their paychecks called an “agency” or “fair share” fee. This so-called “fair share” fee supposedly covers the fee payers’ portion of collective bargaining costs, which amounts to approximately 80% of total membership dues.

Fee payers do not have voting privileges and are also ineligible for legal representation and professional liability insurance from the labor union.<sup>14</sup> Many teachers who would otherwise reject union membership believe they need the union for legal purposes. However, fee paying teachers are able to access representation and liability insurance benefits from their school district or from alternative professional groups, such as the Keystone Teachers Association (KEYTA), as well as other low-cost private insurance policy options.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, despite the benefits PSEA claims to offer its members, more school employees are choosing to opt out of union membership. Although PSEA’s voting members increased 14% from 2002 to 2007, the labor organization’s agency fee payers—those rejecting union membership—increased 39% in just two years from 3,796 in 2005 to 5,279 in 2007.<sup>16</sup>

**Dues Deduction.** Taxpayers usually don’t realize it but their tax dollars are paying for school districts to act as collection agencies for labor organizations by automatically deducting dues from workers’ paychecks and remitting payments to the labor union.

Teachers and other union employees never actually receive their union dues. School districts regularly write a check from a taxpayer-funded bank account and send it directly to union headquarters. The payroll deductions and record-keeping is coordinated by taxpayer-funded school employees, not union officials. Thus, taxpayer money funds the routine reduction of teachers’ and other school employees’ salaries.

Even employees who reject union membership for religious reasons are forced to have part of their salary deducted—the union gives dues payments to a non-religious charitable organization agreed upon *jointly* by the union and the employee.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the scenario, school employees in agency shop districts are forced to forfeit a portion of their paychecks for representation they would rather not have.

**Maintenance of Membership.** Unionized employees must retain membership status for the duration of the collectively bargained contract. This “maintenance of membership” stipulation, which was authorized by Act 195 of 1970, is another coercive

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benefit that unions wield to increase financial power by refusing to release workers from their union membership status.

**Teacher Strikes.** Although thirty-seven states prohibit teachers from striking, Pennsylvania’s laws grant unions full authorization to do so.<sup>18</sup> Act 195 of 1970 gives Pennsylvania public school employees the “right to strike”—and the PSEA has taken full advantage of this negotiation weapon. Indeed, Pennsylvania traditionally has more teacher strikes than the rest of the nation combined (see TABLE 1).

In the 2006-07 school year, Pennsylvania teachers went on strike 18 times while other states experienced a combined total of eight strikes. That school year, Pennsylvania teacher strikes affected 37,814 students and 2,826 employees statewide.<sup>19</sup> Although the passage of Act 88 in 1992, which mandated a 180-day school year, served to reduce strikes in Pennsylvania, the state remains the “Teacher Strike Capital of America.”

Striking teachers in Pennsylvania typically receive 100% of their salaries, despite the disruption to parents and students. They simply make up their picket-line days by extending the school year or eliminating scheduled holidays. Other states, however, impose penalties for strike days. For example, in New York, teachers forfeit two days of pay for every day on strike.<sup>20</sup>

It should come as no surprise that PSEA has blocked attempts to regulate teacher strikes, though thirty-seven other states already legally prohibit them. In reference to a proposed statute, the Strike Free Education Act (HB 1369 of the 2007-08 legislative session), PSEA notes that its “lobbyists are working with legislators to keep these bills from reaching the floor of either the House or Senate for a vote.”<sup>21</sup>

**TABLE 1: Pennsylvania Teacher Strikes Compared to All Other States**

Calendar Year	All Other States	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania strikes as a percentage of total
2006	8	18	225.0%
2005	7	13	185.7%
2004	8	12	150.0%
2003	15	8	53.3%
2002	18	13	72.2%
2001	21	6	28.6%
2000	24	10	41.7%
1999	21	16	76.2%
1998	23	13	56.5%
1997	25	10	40.0%
1996	18	4	22.2%
1995	25	9	36.0%
1994	32	15	46.9%
1993	30	22	73.3%
1992	49	13	26.5%
1991	99	34	34.3%
1990	77	23	29.9%
1971-1989	3,322	775	23.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>26.5%</b>

Source: Pennsylvania School Boards Association, *School Employee Strikes*; <http://www.psb.org>

## Lobbying Politicians

The PSEA has evolved into a powerful political machine, with full and part-time political operatives in the state capital and in 13 regionally positioned offices throughout the Commonwealth. The ability to influence politics and shape public policy—even beyond education—is key to the union’s survival and prosperity.

Although PSEA’s official function is to negotiate on behalf of teachers and other staff with school boards, it spends a considerable amount of time and money trying

**TABLE 2: PSEA Lobbyist Salaries 2006-2007**

Name	Gross Salary	Official Disbursements	Total Salary
John Baughman	\$216,585	\$18,331	\$234,916
Theresa Barnaby	\$209,728	\$16,221	\$225,949
Laurel McLeish	\$114,309	\$40,630	\$154,939
Kelby Waltman	\$114,309	\$16,641	\$130,950
Stephen Dunkle	\$114,480	\$8,240	\$122,720
Carol Karl	\$115,148	\$4,932	\$120,080
James Vaughan	\$104,007	\$7,224	\$111,231
Kathleen Greider	\$91,280	\$14,934	\$106,214
Elizabeth Zampogna	\$6,822	\$0	\$6,822
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$1,213,821</b>

to influence public policy issues. The union uses its resources directly and indirectly to influence politics at every level, from the school board to the White House. The attention PSEA gives to lobbying politicians is reflected in the number of its lobbyists and their levels of compensation (see CHART 2).

The PSEA obviously has powerful incentives to build an extensive network of personnel to directly and indirectly influence local, regional, statewide, and national political campaigns. This is done through hard and soft dollar contributions totaling

Source: US Department of Labor, Annual Financial Disclosure Reports, Union Form LM-2; <http://www.dol.gov>

hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the 2005-06 election cycles, PSEA’s Political Action Committee for Education (PSEA PACE)—the state’s second largest political action committee—spent nearly \$2 million on state campaign contributions.<sup>22</sup> During that time, PSEA PACE contributed \$1,346,699 to Democratic campaigns and \$476,027 to Republican campaigns.<sup>23</sup>

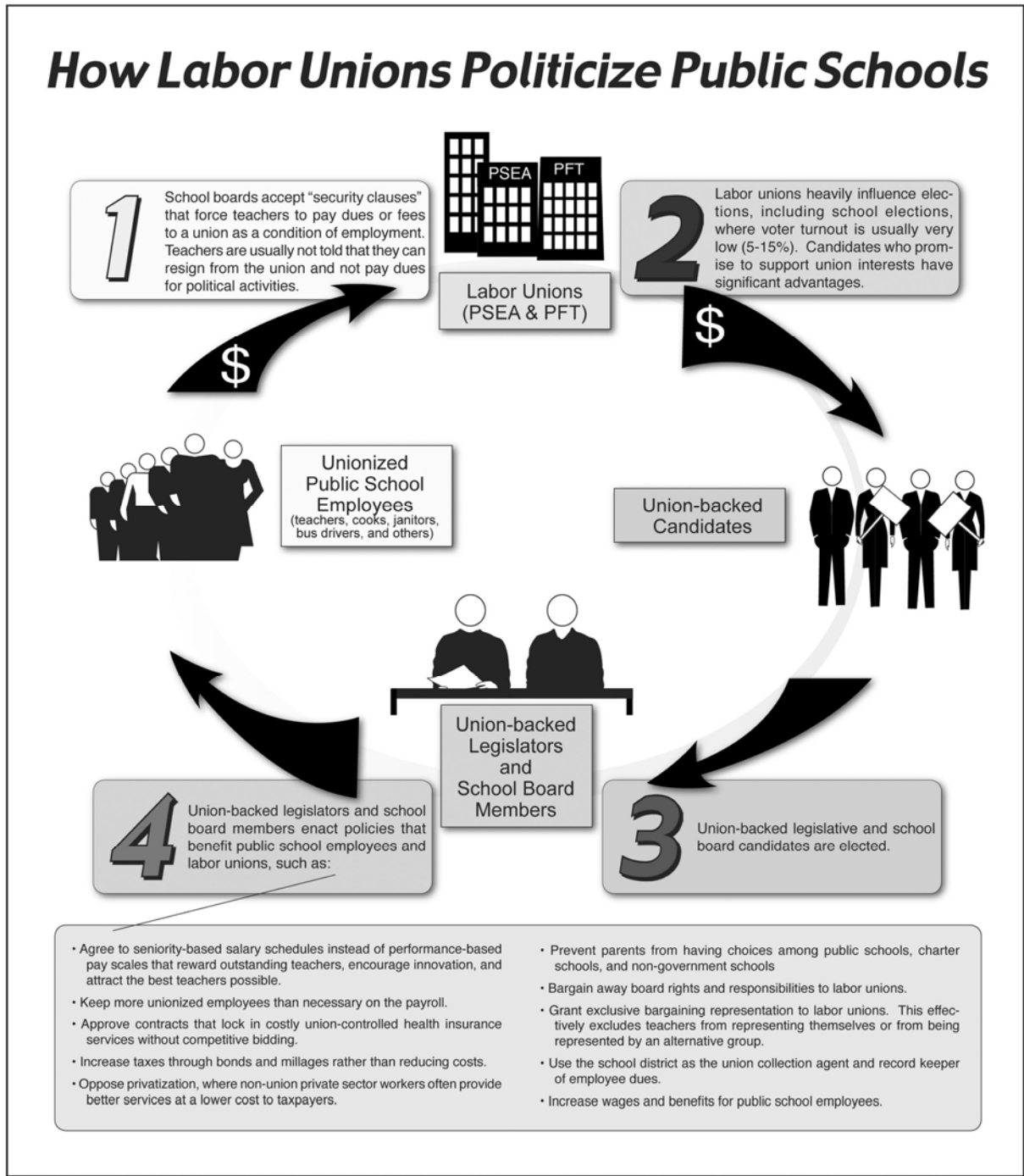
In addition to direct cash contributions to politicians from its political action committee, PSEA-preferred candidates for office are also provided with substantial support through phone banks, literature distribution, door-to-door canvassing, “get out the vote” efforts, and other incalculable donations. The PSEA’s ability to mobilize union activists across the Commonwealth is virtually unmatched by any other special interest group in Pennsylvania. In 2007, the labor union spent over \$1.6 million on these political activities.<sup>24</sup>

While most employees in the private sector earn a larger paycheck by working harder at their jobs to provide a better product or service, employees in the government sector (including public schools) often receive a larger paycheck simply through electing preferred candidates for office, lobbying the state legislature and local school boards for increased taxes, preventing private competition for the provision of services, and involvement in other politically driven activities. The direct link between politics and the pocketbook for government-sector labor unions ex-



plains why the PSEA has moved away from professional development for teachers and embraced its evolution into a comprehensive political machine.

There is no doubt that the PSEA is an influential force in statewide politics; however, the school employees' labor unions have also politicized education at the local school board level by creating a cycle that is nearly impossible to penetrate without union permission. The accompanying chart demonstrates how labor unions maintain control of local school districts once they have unionized the workplace.



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The union's power over our public schools is also evidenced by its ability to add more employees to the system at a faster rate than student growth. Between 1996-97 and 2005-06, the state's public schools added over 43,000, staff while student enrollment increased by only 26,000. In other words, for every additional student in the system, another 1.6 adults were employed by the public schools.<sup>25</sup>

The labor union's success in adding and organizing employees and maintaining political power is impressive, to be sure. But in the process, labor unions effectively marginalize students by focusing not on proven school reforms but on improving financial benefits for members and the union itself.

### Marginalizing Students

**Labor unions effectively marginalize students by focusing not on proven school reforms but on improving financial benefits for members and the union itself.**

Every year the PSEA sets its legislative agenda through official resolutions, which express the union's position on a number of issues ranging from employee healthcare to school choice to merit pay for teachers. These official resolutions reveal much about the union's values; they include:

- **Opposition to merit pay for teachers.** Merit pay is intended to attract, reward, and retain high-quality teachers and to encourage low-performing teachers to find another line of work. PSEA's opposition to this system reveals the organization's refusal to address teacher quality issues with appropriate incentives.
- **Reduced class sizes and more union members.** Whatever the perceived educational benefits of smaller class sizes, one guaranteed outcome is that reduced class sizes result in more unionized teachers—and more union dues money.
- **Comprehensive health insurance coverage.** Although private sector employees usually pay all or a portion of their health care insurance premiums for coverage that they receive through their employer—if they receive any coverage at all—the PSEA will frequently go on strike for having to cost-share for even a minimal amount of their taxpayer-funded health insurance coverage.
- **The “right” to strike.** PSEA has firmly opposed anti-strike laws and stresses that strikebreakers are subject to “member discipline.” The PSEA has liberally exercised this powerful weapon in school board negotiations. Simply threatening a strike provides the union with significant bargaining power that cannot be matched by a school board.
- **Opposition to “paycheck protection” laws.** The PSEA defends its use of members' dues for lobbying and other political activities without prior approval. In 1999, it strongly opposed HB 1968 which would have allowed members to exercise their First Amendment rights to not contribute to the PSEA's political actions.<sup>26</sup>
- **Support for universal preschool.** In 2007, PSEA lobbied for Governor Rendell's \$75 million plan for pre-K funding across the state, despite a robust and effective private sector preschool system in Pennsylvania.<sup>27</sup>
- **Opposition to home schooling.** PSEA believes that home instruction—a matter of parental preference—should be discouraged, and that students should be taught only by union members with state teacher certification.
- **Opposition to parental choice in education.** PSEA opposes vouchers, tuition tax credits, and tuition tax deductions. It has a record of supporting legislation



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that hinders parental choice, such as limiting funding for public school students attending public cyber charter schools.<sup>28</sup>

The labor union effectively opposes education reforms and improves its financial well-being through its ability to influence the political and legislative processes. But the impact of the union's power is far-reaching, particularly when it comes to school taxes that fund public education.

## Increasing Taxes

The PSEA's success is dependent in large part on its ability to secure increasingly larger sums of taxpayer money for the public schools and—ultimately—the union itself. The tipping point for the PSEA came with the passage of Act 8 of 1988, which enabled the union to dramatically increase its financial and political power.

Because the PSEA is indirectly funded through taxpayer dollars,<sup>29</sup> the incentive to increase taxes for public schools is high. Lower tax increases for the public schools equates to lower revenues for the labor union; so it is no surprise that taxes on Pennsylvanians have concomitantly increased with the growth of the PSEA's political power to influence tax decisions.

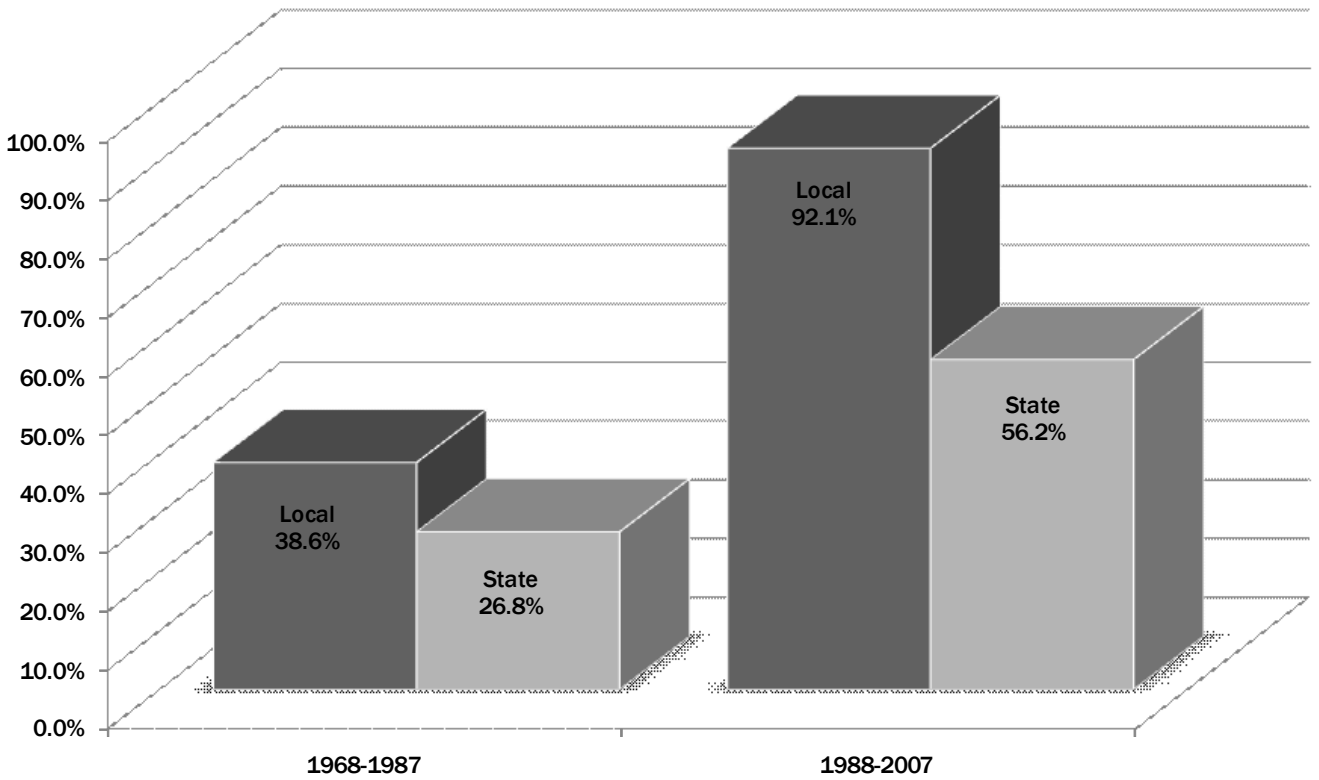
Comprehensive data on total Pennsylvania public school tax revenues and expenditures for the years 1968-2007 show how effective the PSEA has been in influencing tax increases in the Commonwealth. In the years preceding Act 84 (1968-87), the growth of public school revenue from state and local sources outpaced inflation by 27% and 39%, respectively, after adjusting for inflation.<sup>30</sup> However, in the years following Act 84 (1988-2007), public school tax revenue growth from state sources outpaced inflation by 56%, and growth from local sources was 92%, after adjusting for inflation.<sup>31</sup> (See CHART 1, next page) These dramatic increases of more than double the rate of inflation are attributable in large part to the PSEA's enhanced influence on the political process at both the state and local levels.

Although the union faces “competition” for taxpayer dollars at the state level, the PSEA has a virtual monopoly of influence over powerful local taxation units of government—school districts. Through contract negotiations with school districts—and the complicity of school board members—union demands at the bargaining table effectively drove up local property taxes by 89% during the 1988-2007 period (after adjusting for inflation).<sup>32</sup> That dwarfs growth in the pre-Act 84 years of 1968-1987, when property taxes rose at a rate of only 36% after inflation. (See CHART 2, next page.)

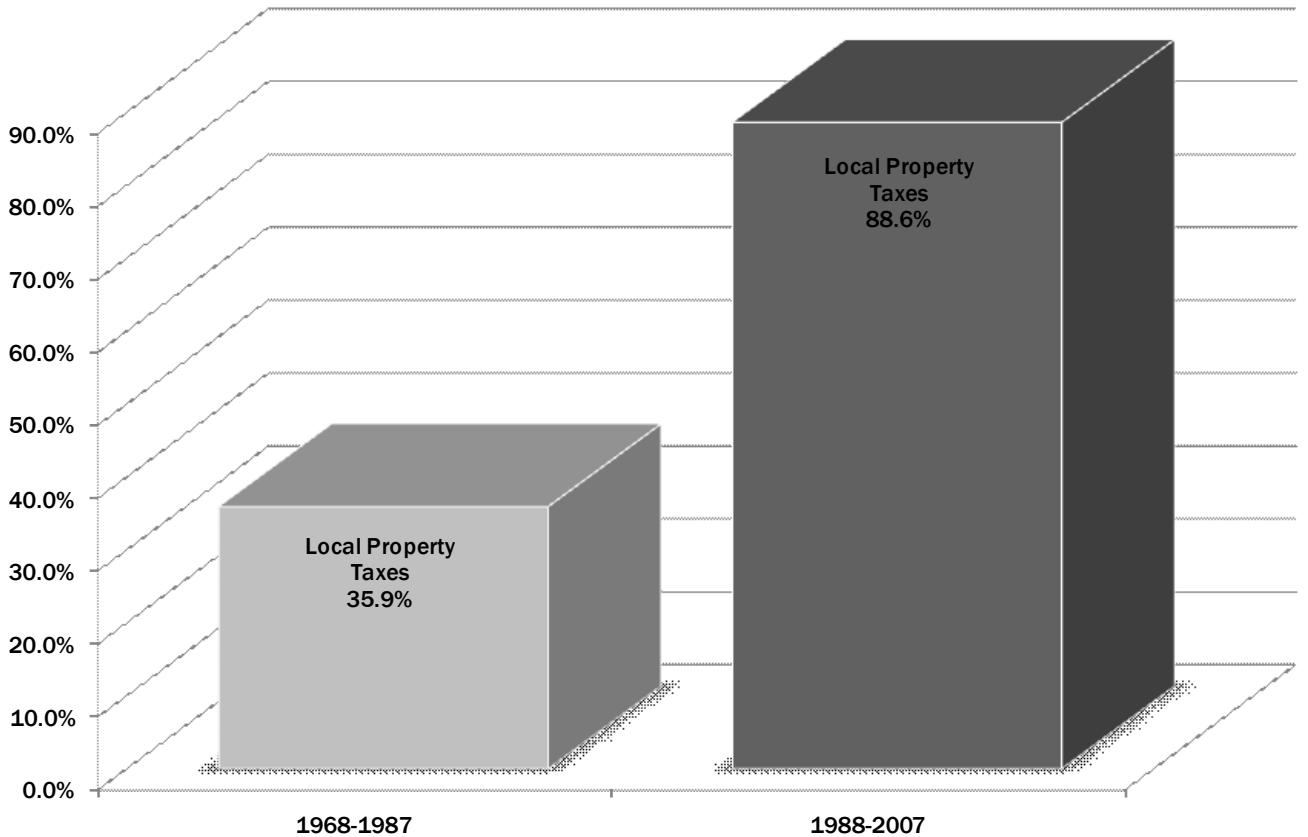
The PSEA's success in bargaining for increasingly expensive contracts with school boards and effectively lobbying state legislators has led to higher taxes on citizens. In part, higher taxes have provided Pennsylvania's public school teachers with the fourth highest salaries in the nation (when adjusted for the cost of living). Pennsylvania's average teacher salary of \$53,258, ranked ninth in the nation during the 2004-05 school year (versus the national average of \$47,808).<sup>33</sup> After adjusting for the cost of living, however, Pennsylvania teachers jumped to the fourth highest paid in the nation.<sup>34</sup>

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**CHART 1: Inflation-Adjusted Growth of Pennsylvania Public School Revenue Before and After Compulsory Union Act of 1988**



**CHART 2: Inflation-Adjusted Growth of Pennsylvania Public School Property Tax Revenue Before and After Compulsory Union Act of 1988**



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In addition to wages, Pennsylvania teachers receive excellent health care and retirement benefits that typically exceed those provided by employers in the private sector. Indeed, the defined-benefit pension plans for school employees not only exceed those typically found in the private sector, but are among the best public pension plans in the nation. The high cost of these pensions presents a looming crisis for taxpayers and will likely require dramatic increases in state taxes and local property taxes to pay for their burgeoning costs.<sup>35</sup>

Even given the generous salaries that Pennsylvania teachers receive, it is nevertheless clear that our public schools' best teachers are underpaid as a result of rigid union salary schedules that prohibit merit-based increases for high-performing educators. But salaries for high-performing teachers would most certainly rise if school board directors refused to accept union-negotiated salary schedules that compensate teachers equally by unfairly taking money from excellent educators and distributing it to union-protected mediocre and poorly-performing teachers. Regardless, in 493 of 496 Pennsylvania school districts for which data exist, teachers make more for nine months of work than the mean annual salaries for all workers in the county of their school district.<sup>36</sup> Pennsylvania public school teachers earn, on average, 50% more than the mean county-wide annual salary for all full-time positions.<sup>37</sup>

But are teachers the real beneficiaries of the PSEA's wealth?

### Membership Has Its Privileges

The PSEA's website once claimed, "Membership Doesn't Cost—It Pays!" An analysis of information gathered by the U.S. Department of Labor reveals that PSEA membership truly does pay—particularly if you are a PSEA union employee or official.

Many unions, organizations, companies, and individuals profit from Pennsylvania's \$22.9 billion government school industry, but the employees of the PSEA are clearly some of the greatest beneficiaries of taxpayer money. According to the labor union's 2006-07 LM-2 report, the PSEA collected \$84 million from various sources, much of which came from compulsory membership dues (\$320-400 per teacher for PSEA dues alone in 2007-08), interest and dividends, rent, the sale of investments and fixed assets, and reimbursement from its national affiliate (the NEA) for services provided.<sup>38</sup>

More than one-third of the PSEA's revenue makes its way into the pockets of hundreds of PSEA employees. In 2006-07, the average PSEA employee salary was \$82,081, or 51% more than the average teacher salary and 110% more than the average worker in Pennsylvania.<sup>39</sup> PSEA also provides member-funded benefits at an average of \$62,248 per employee, including membership dues for other organizations, tuition reimbursement, relocation reimbursement, pensions, hospitalization, and auto, health, dental, vision, and life insurance.<sup>40</sup>

Ninety-nine PSEA employees received salaries of more than \$100,000 in 2006-

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07.<sup>41</sup> With nearly 1 out of every 3 union employees receiving a six-figure income—a level that few, if any, teachers will ever reach.

In 2006-07, the PSEA's top ten highest paid employees received average salaries of \$187,048, or 246% more than the average teacher and 380% more than the average Pennsylvania worker.<sup>42</sup>

### **PSEA Employee Junkets**

In addition to salaries and health benefits, PSEA employees receive other perks and bonuses such as golf outings, ski resorts trips, and rooms in luxury hotels—all paid with members' dues and non-members' fees—including:<sup>43</sup>

- \$38,245 for a "Professional Education Conference" at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, a luxury ski resort.
- \$28,175 for a "Leadership Conference" at Woodlands Inn and Resort, a three-star Poconos hotel.
- \$8,000 for a "Leadership Conference Hospitality" at High Street Brews.
- \$6,951 for a "Region Golf Event" at the Kimberton Golf Club.
- \$7,660 for a "Region Pre-Retirement Workshop" at Willow Room Partners.
- \$11,732 in promotional items from Pro Knitwear.

### **The Union's Best Interests**

Every Pennsylvanian should be concerned about the financial incentives and political agenda that drive the Pennsylvania State Education Association. It is the only labor union that holds inordinate sway over both Pennsylvanians' paychecks and children. Not only does the union profit from the taxpayers' annual expenditure of \$22.9 billion on public education, but it heavily influences public policy in Pennsylvania, as well as the system of schools that are supposed to educate our children and help prepare them for responsible citizenship and productive lives.

The PSEA works hard to convince citizens that it represents the best interests of teachers, children, and public education. However, the evidence reveals the labor union's top priorities are (1) organizing employees into collective bargaining units and securing compulsory dues agreements from school boards; (2) influencing legislation by financially supporting, electing, and lobbying officials at every level of government; and (3) securing increasingly larger amounts of taxpayer money for the public schools and—ultimately—the union itself.

Fortunately, there are policy solutions to these problems, but it will take leadership and courage to oppose the financially and politically powerful labor unions.

The governor and General Assembly should:

- **Enact a "Right-to-Work" Law and Eliminate "Agency Shops"**. Twenty-two other states do not allow unions to compel workers to pay dues or fees as a condition of employment. Such a law would restore individual freedom to teachers and other employees as well as force unions to treat members as custom-

Every Pennsylvanian should be concerned about the financial incentives and political agenda that drive the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

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ers to be served rather than captives in the workplace. All districts should be considered open shop, so that every employee is free from coercion to join the local union and unions are freed from providing representation at the bargaining table.

- **Outlaw Teacher Strikes.** Thirty-seven states legally prohibit teacher strikes. Teacher strikes are a waste of money, time, and energy and serve only to inhibit the education process of Pennsylvania students and provide labor unions with undue influence and power over taxpayers.
- **Eliminate Monopoly Bargaining Rights.** This would allow school employees to form their own union, join a union other than the local PSEA chapter, or choose not to join a union at all.
- **Prohibit Payroll Deductions.** Locally, school boards could negotiate an “open shop” workplace and refuse to automatically deduct dues from employees’ paychecks. This would give school employees the opportunity to keep their entire salary or pay union dues voluntarily.
- **Enact a Paycheck Protection Law.** In Pennsylvania, union members who do not want their union dues to be used for political activities must leave the union (and become an agency fee payer). Several states have enacted paycheck protection laws. They require unions like the PSEA to obtain the permission of members before using dues for political purposes.

One would hope that the education of children would be the number one priority of the Pennsylvania State *Education* Association. Unfortunately, the organization’s emphasis on its own best interests—at the expense of taxpayers, parents, children, and even teachers—will continue to prevent it from truly serving the very people it purports to represent. But as long as the Governor and General Assembly grant labor unions special legal privileges, teachers will continue to be compelled to pay dues and fees to organizations against their will, the educational priorities of children will be superseded, and taxpayers will pay higher and higher taxes.

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## Endnotes

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2. Pennsylvania State Education Association, *Office Locations* (2008), at [www.psea.org/general.aspx?id=644&coll\\_id=44](http://www.psea.org/general.aspx?id=644&coll_id=44)
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