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PAC dues support pro-public education candidates, local election assistance

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The Education Minnesota Political Action Committee is funded by \$25 donations from members, separate from dues, and goes towards building political power through supporting pro-public education, pro-labor candidates and elected officials at all levels of government. The PAC is one of the union's most powerful tools to bring educator voices into state and local politics.

Nowhere is this more important than at the local level – particularly in school board races. We elect our bosses when we vote for [school](#) board, and who sits on the school board impacts everything from salary, to budget, to length of the school year, benefits, pensions, testing and more.

WHAT DOES POLITICS HAVE TO DO WITH MY CLASSROOM?

YOUR SALARY	SCHOOL BOARD, UNION
SCHOOL BUDGET	SCHOOL BOARD
CLASS SIZE/WORKLOAD	SCHOOL BOARD, STATE LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR
LENGTH OF SCHOOL YEAR	SCHOOL BOARD, STATE LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR
HEALTH BENEFITS	SCHOOL BOARD, UNION
DUE PROCESS	SCHOOL BOARD, STATE LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR
PENSIONS	SCHOOL BOARD, STATE LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR
TESTING	FEDERAL, STATE, SCHOOL BOARD
HIRING PRACTICES	SCHOOL BOARD, STATE LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR
TEACHING CREDENTIALS	FEDERAL, STATE, GOVERNOR
STANDARDS	STATE BOARD, STATE, FEDERAL
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION	FEDERAL, STATE, GOVERNOR
TEXTBOOKS	STATE, SCHOOL BOARD
NEGOTIATED CONTRACTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION	STATE LEGISLATURE, LOCAL UNION, GOVERNOR
HIGHER EDUCATION CREDENTIALING	GOVERNOR
CAMPUS REPAIRS AND UPGRADES	STATE LEGISLATURE



In 2022, Minnesota saw an unprecedented influx of anti-public education school board candidates, supported by groups like the Minnesota Parents' Alliance, Moms for Liberty and the Minnesota Child Protection League (an anti-LGBTQ hate group [1]). These candidates ran on platforms seeking to limit students' freedom to learn, whitewash history, prevent certain students from feeling safe and welcome in their classrooms and weaken unions.

We will face more of these candidates in 2024. These anti-public education groups, funded by billionaires with near-limitless financial resources, have already begun recruiting school board candidates for this cycle. While we do not have their bottomless financial resources, we do have the collective power of our union and public trust in educators. It is up to us to use every tool at our disposal to fight back against these attacks on our public schools and elect school board members who will support students and educators.

State-level politics are also important. While other states' legislative sessions resulted in book bans, targeted attacks on LGBTQ+ students and educators or drastic expansion of voucher schemes, Minnesota's legislative session saw pro-educator, pro-student policies – including [12 weeks](#) of paid family medical leave, a ban on book bans to protect the freedom to learn and universal school meals to ensure that no Minnesota child goes hungry.

Your PAC donations helped make that happen.

What does the PAC Board do?

The PAC Board is made up of volunteer members from across the state and includes a member from each of the union election districts. These members discuss and determine the campaign plan for each election, including the endorsement process, how PAC dollars will be spent and the support that will be provided to local elections and referendums.

The PAC Board determines how the endorsement process will work. Currently, the process requires candidates to fill out a questionnaire and meet with educators from their area for an interview. Those educators recommend a candidate for endorsement, which is then approved by the PAC Board.

How are PAC dollars spent?

Much of the PAC money is spent supporting candidates that Education Minnesota has endorsed, but a significant portion of the budget goes to member organizing and support for local elections, such as school board races. Education Minnesota also seeks PAC support from the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, and this year we have received over \$100,000 from both organizations to help locals get involved in school board elections.

To further support this goal, the PAC has quintupled its funding for voter outreach in school board elections. This PAC funding includes four pieces of mail sent directly to voters in the district (locals pay only \$1 per member for each piece of mail), stipends for phone bank coordinators and additional funds for food and incidentals incurred by members while doing campaign work.

A robust voter outreach program is key to effectively fighting back against anti-public education groups, and when Education Minnesota endorses, candidates win. When locals use PAC funds to make endorsements and carry out a strong voter outreach plan, the candidates we support win more than 80 percent of the time.

Case study: Chisago Lakes

For years, Chisago Lakes school district had school board candidates who generally ran unopposed. Some years, they did not even have enough [candidates file](#) to run. The lack of competitive elections led to complacency among board members, many of whom simply rubber-stamped the recommendations of the Superintendent and Business Manager with little or no debate. This created a district culture of top-down management, with unilateral decision making instead of a representative board working collaboratively.

In 2020, the local decided to get involved in school board elections and, with financial support from the Education Minnesota PAC, endorsed and elected their local union president to the school board. They built on that momentum in 2022, again working with the PAC to endorse and elect two more school board members. In 2023, a school board member resigned and the local elected another union-endorsed candidate – giving pro-public education, pro-union members a majority on the board.

“It is our belief that this [majority] helped us achieve an equitable contract during negotiations and will go a long way in winning back community support down the road,” said Jeremy Peterson, geography teacher and PAC board member.

Why is voter outreach so important?

Politics impacts so much [of](#) our members’ daily lives. When pro-public education, pro-labor elected officials are in power, public-school employees can focus on what they do best—educating—instead of worrying about whether extremist, anti-public education leaders will try to slash their funding and stall contract negotiations.

During the 2023-24 legislative session, Minnesota had pro-public education majorities in both legislative chambers and in the governor’s office. This trifecta allowed lawmakers to pass historic investments in public education and take significant steps to alleviate the teacher shortage.

If we keep this Legislative majority, then we will be able to build on these gains and tackle important issues like increasing access to affordable health care, increasing teacher pay and protecting the freedom to learn. If local unions get involved in school board elections, we can ensure that our schools are represented by individuals who share our goal of providing the public schools that Minnesota students and educators deserve.

Learn more at edmnvotes.org.

[1] According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, splcenter.org/states/minnesota

#August-September 2024

#Issues and Impact

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41 Sherburne Ave
St. Paul, MN 55103

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CONTACT

Phone: 651-227-9541
800-652-9073

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