

Rebecca Friedrichs
Kansas Senate Commerce Committee – Proponent Testimony
SB 361

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee: Thank you for allowing me to testify. It's an honor to share my story today.

My name is Rebecca Friedrichs. I've served as an elementary school teacher in the State of California for 28 years. In that capacity, I paid dues to the National Education Association, the California Teachers' Association and the Savanna District Teachers' Association.

I served as a union site representative and as the secretary on my local union executive board.

I thought my colleagues and I would have a voice in our union, but we were ignored, silenced and openly harassed by CTA and NEA union leadership.

Unfortunately, many government unions have become what traditional unions used to fight – abusive overlords who bully, harass, and use employees and our hard-earned money for union corruption, wealth and power.

I traveled here from California because I personally understand the vital reasons public employees must receive practical, easy to access, fully transparent information on their constitutional rights to obtain freedom from union dues.

As a representative of my fellow government employees, here are some examples of my experiences:

- In 2008, I attended a CTA leadership conference with hundreds of other teacher leaders. One brave CA teacher asked how teachers could gain a voice in how our union dues are spent.
- Our dues are used to push far-left radical politics and policies that are harmful to our students. She asked how we could stop this misuse of our dues and be empowered to protect our students and profession.
- From the stage, NEA and CTA leadership ganged up on that teacher. They denounced, berated, and isolated her. They made all of us feel like we were backward, evil, and cruel if we didn't agree with union politics.
- Then they educated us on the "right" way to think.
- Their ridicule was so severe, that every single one of us sat frozen in fear like little children tormented by bullies on a playground.
- This is how union officials treat America's loving teachers who dare to ask for union accountability.

One year I tried to organize a teacher supported 3% pay cut to save the jobs of several outstanding colleagues who were being laid off during the severe downturn in the economy. Though district administration agreed we could save the jobs, union leaders forbade me from allowing teachers to cast a democratic vote to save jobs. Instead, I was told,

“Don’t worry about those teachers Rebecca. The union will take care of them. We’re going to give them a seminar on how to collect unemployment benefits.”

Every one of those teachers lost their jobs.

- Class sizes went up in a low-income district full of needy kids
- Those remarkable teachers were demoralized.
 - One couldn’t understand why she wasn’t appreciated for bringing up test scores.
 - One told me she must have been wrong about God’s calling on her life.
 - Another was pregnant and lost her medical insurance.
 - All of them paid \$1,000 a year to union that literally destroyed their jobs.
- Our faculty had no voice; no vote; no democratic process.
- We suffered another blow to our already hurting morale.
- Silenced again by the union that claimed to represent us.

Yet we had no recourse.

- In 2012, after fighting for a quarter century for my colleagues and our students and facing hundreds of similar discouraging union “representations,” I decided to opt out of the union.
 - The union lied to me about opt out rights.
 - There was nowhere I could go to discover my rights.
 - The process for opting out was not in our contract, and district personnel was not permitted to tell me.
- I had to seek professional help to discover how to opt out. I learned:
 - There was a narrow opt out window
 - A separate annual process required to receive a refund of a small portion of my dues
 - I had to write a letter using specific language
 - I had to mail a certified copy, “return receipt requested” to union headquarters because the union was lying and claiming they didn’t receive the letters.
 - Then I had to give a copy to my local union president.
- The process was purposely obscure, confusing, and intimidating.
- Those experiences and hundreds more are the reason 9 other CA teachers and I sued the CTA and NEA for freedom from forced unionism, and thousands of teachers silently stood with us – too terrified to speak out.
- The unions labeled us “Spawns of satan,” “anti-public schools,” “anti-teacher,” “pawns of the wealthy one-percent,” “freeloaders,” and many other derogatory terms, but we

were fighting to empower employees and I would do it again a thousand times to free teachers and children from the abusive, corrupt leaders masquerading as “teachers’ unions.”

Unfortunately, too many legislators are unaware of the ways employees are being abused and used by those claiming to be unions, and far too many are unwilling to listen to our personal testimonies.

For those reasons and more, I thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today and I welcome any questions you may have to further understand the plight and needs of government employees.