

APPLEGATE/JACKSON/PARKS FUTURE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP

The Right to Work

By Mrs. Lisa Bishara

To be completely honest, the Right to Work principle was something I was not incredibly familiar with before I heard about this scholarship. Having said that, I must also disclose that it is a principle I have since become increasingly interested in. It holds many valuable issues concerning its importance to educators.

The concept that an American can work for a living with the option, but not the obligation to join a union, is a significant one. After all, wasn't this country grounded in the notion that Americans would be free to live according to their preferences? There was no stipulation that we are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as long as we join a coalition that limits that freedom, with necessary dues and provisions. The choice is what makes America what it is – America. Therefore, it should be a principle the whole country is embracing, and not merely twenty-two states.

The Right to Work principle should also be embraced and taught by educators. This is vitally important to the integrity of education as a whole. We teach that everyone has choices in all they do. Children are required to serve consequences for their poor choices, and are rewarded for their superior choices. We teach nonconformity, “If your friends jumped off the highest bridge, does that make it the right choice for you?” No, this is not an acceptable answer. We teach that it is important for the child to opt for traveling their own course regardless of that his or her peers take. How, then, are we to allow ourselves to be forced into compulsory unionization? It is important to support voluntary unionism, which emphasizes the importance of choice.

[sic] Aside from the message that is sent, and example that is made to the children, there are other principles involved for educators as far as unionism is concerned. It is important to examine the fact that Right to Work is not “pro,” or “anti” union. As an educator, one must be amenable to the community in which one is working. In some areas, being a member of a union is gainful. It protects the rights of its members, and assures uniform privileges. This could be especially beneficial in areas in which minority rights or inconsistent treatment is frequently occurring. However, the option to join the union is vital, because being forced to join a union simply because of one's chosen profession, or place of employment also brings with it unwanted dues and restrictions in behavior. The important thing should be that educators are educating. The focus should not be laid on carrying a membership card, or paying annual fees.

As I have investigated the principles of voluntary unionism, and the benefits of the Right to Work principle, I am reminded of the importance of the right to choose. The option to join a union is a valuable one. Without the choice, whether it is forced upon us or denied, we would hardly be considered a free nation. It is essential that we, as educators are setting the precedent that choosing is an important factor in our society. We should be accountable for the choices we make, not those that are denied us. Also, it must be reiterated that the most significant choice we make is to educate. That is where the focus should lie, and not what membership card one carries in one's pocket.