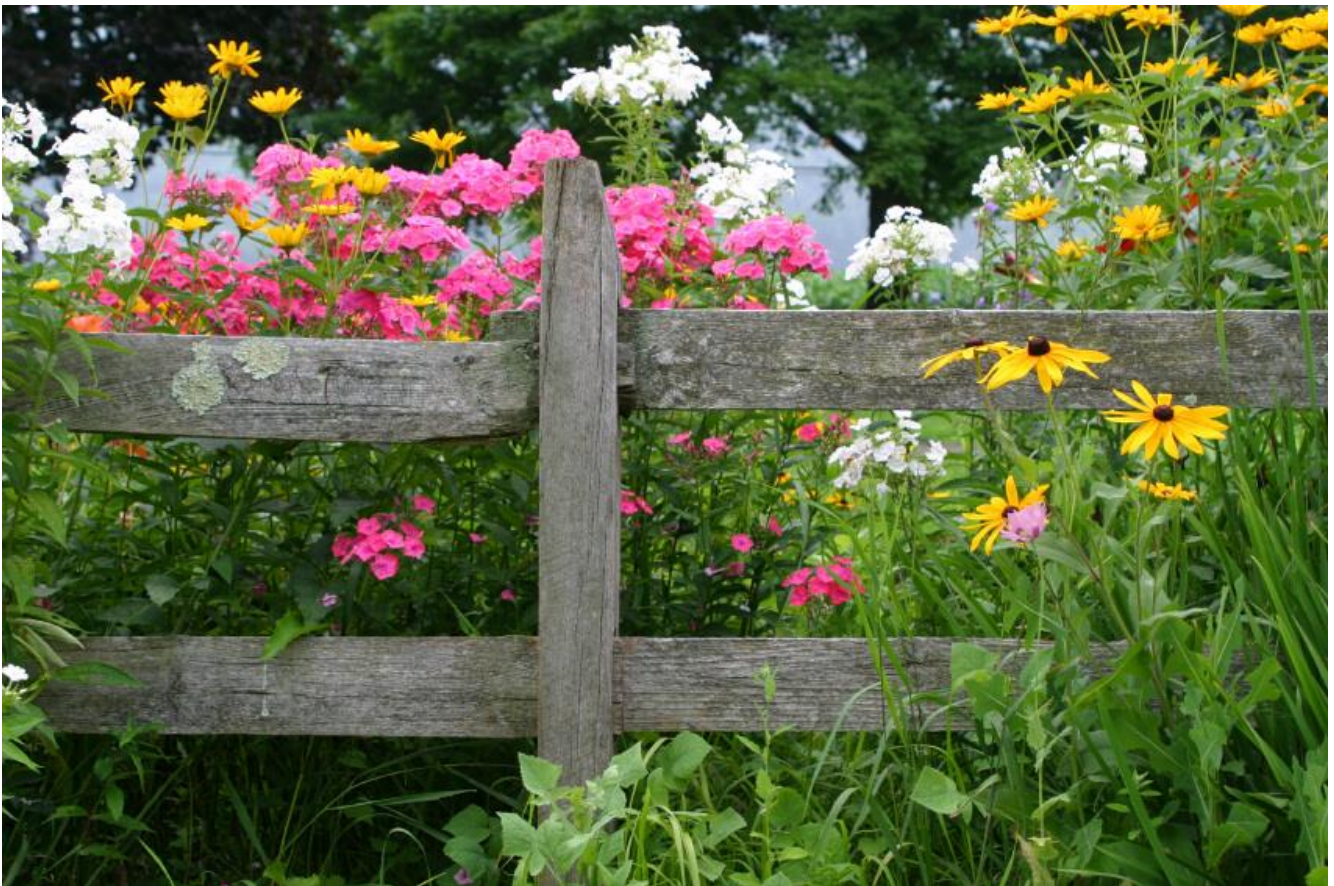




On Target

AFT Local #2569

May 2018



Clarence Teachers Make the Difference

2018 Has Been Deadlier for Schoolchildren Than Service Members

By [Philip Bump](#) May 18 [Email the author](#)

This article has been updated.

The school shooting [near Houston](#) on Friday bolstered a stunning statistic: More people have been killed at schools this year than have been killed while serving in the military.

Initial estimates put the number killed at Santa Fe High School at eight. (The death toll has since risen to 10.) We can compare that to figures for the military compiled from Defense Department news releases, including both combat and noncombat deaths. Even excluding non-students who died in school shootings (for example, teachers) the total still exceeds military casualties.

A large part of that is the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14.

This is not usually the case. In 2017, the number of fatalities among service members was far higher than the number of people killed in school shootings, according to [The Washington Post data](#).

After this story was originally published, Jared Keller, a senior editor at the site Task & Purpose, noted that the Department of Defense releases offered an incomplete picture of service member fatalities. Separate data compiled by the [Navy](#), including the Marines, adds another seven casualties to the total, excluding motor vehicle accidents. In May, an Air National Guard plane [crashed](#) in Georgia killing another nine — an incident not included in the Department of Defense's reports.

“The DoD doesn't always present a clear picture of accidental mishap-related deaths due to worries about operational security, hence the trouble with [Public Affairs

Office] releases,” Keller wrote in an email. “Back in March 2017, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis even **cautioned** public affairs officials across the military to ‘be cautious about publicly telegraphing readiness shortfalls’ because ‘communicating that we are broken or not ready to fight invites miscalculation,’ as his spokesman put it at the time.”

The figures for 2018 do not suggest schools are more dangerous than combat zones. After all, there are more than **50 million students** in public elementary and high schools and only about **1.3 million members** of the armed forces. So far in 2018, a member of the military has been about 40 times as likely to be killed as someone is to die in a school shooting, including Keller’s revised figures.

That said, it is still the case that 2018 is shaping up to be unusually deadly at schools. Comparing the number of deaths and the number of shooting incidents this year directly with those through May 18 of 2017, that difference is stark.

The number of deaths and school shooting incidents through May 18 are each higher this year than at any point since 2000. There have been three times as many deaths in school shootings so far this year than in the second-most deadly year through May 18, 2005.

In fact, there were 36 fatalities in school shootings in total through May 18 of each year from 2000 to 2017 — only slightly more than there have been in 2018 alone.

Without the shootings in Florida and Texas, the figure is substantially lower. In 2000 through 2017, there were an average of two deaths in five or six school shootings through this point in each year. Without Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Santa Fe, the totals in 2018 would be four deaths in 14 incidents.

With them, it is 29 deaths in 16 incidents.

So far in 2018, there have been 13 service member fatalities in seven incidents. Seven of those casualties occurred in **a helicopter crash** in Iraq in March. Three of the total number of military casualties were not related to combat.

The Teachers Are Winning. What Does It Mean for the Profession?

—Matt York/AP
By [Stephen Sawchuk](#)

May 7, 2018

The extraordinary wave of teacher strikes highlights these crucial but often forgotten facts: In number, teachers are the largest profession in the United States. And collectively, they have the power to demand and win changes to funding and salaries.

It's a stark reminder in an era characterized by diminishing labor influence. And yet political scientists, researchers, and labor-watchers say it's tough to predict how teachers' reawakened activism will continue to evolve.

"Teachers are very humble. They just go about their business—we do the best with what we have and we don't complain," said Alberto Morejon, a teacher and the grassroots organizer of the Oklahoma walkout last month. But now, "People are finally realizing what we're dealing with. ... They didn't know the truth, and now they know the truth. It's slowly going to spread around the country."

Perhaps, but there are other possibilities, too. The activism could fade slowly away, as Occupy Wall Street and other protest movements of the past decade did. Or it could find a more permanent channel for its energy, perhaps through the regeneration of teachers' unions—which are facing the probable loss of dollars and members as the result of an upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision.

With Arizona teachers seemingly inking another win—Gov. Doug Ducey **signed a 20 percent pay raise into law alongside an education funding increase** last week—eyes are turning toward **North Carolina, where teachers are preparing for a May 16 walkout.**

Here are summaries of some of the strikes' implications for policy, salaries, and the teachers' unions.

Effects on Salaries and Funding

More than anything else, the strikes have brought widespread attention to the fact that teachers in Arizona, Oklahoma, and West Virginia had among the **lowest take-home pay in the country**.

That the strikes have occurred in states with histories of tax cuts is no surprise. The bulk of school spending goes to personnel, and so over a time, a smaller spending pie translates into diminishing pay. (Some economists have also noted the tendency of districts to hire more aides and nonclassroom staff as a factor in low pay.)

One of the striking teachers' innovations, particularly in Arizona and Oklahoma, has been to make the link between teacher pay and overall school funding explicit, policy experts note.

"Your run-of-the-mill teacher strike revolves almost squarely around salaries," said Michael Hansen, the director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, a Washington think tank. "In Oklahoma, where they got half of what they were asking for on salaries, but kept striking [for education funding]—to me, that feels qualitatively different."

What's not clear is whether the shorter-term salary hikes they've won in the states will help shake down solutions to long-term, structural budget issues.

Anti-tax fervor is so prevalent in Arizona, Colorado, and Oklahoma that each state makes passing legislation to raise taxes a political odyssey. And while national polls show that a majority of Americans support the teachers' efforts in theory, that's a far cry from favoring higher taxes in practice.

Largely lost in the debate about teacher pay, meanwhile, is that state education budgets are **increasingly being allocated to the rising costs of health care and pensions**, putting downward pressure on salaries, said Martin West, an associate professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Balancing those competing priorities poses no easy solutions, but **as the Kentucky walkouts proved**, attempts to alter things like

pensions without consulting with teachers first are likely to be met with consequences.

"It's fair to say that if you're a competent or especially a good teacher and looked at your paycheck, you feel massively underpaid, and I've got no quarrel with that," said Frederick Hess, the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a right-leaning think tank. "It's also true that these teachers cost a boatload more than they realize to taxpayers" when benefits are taken into account.

Policy experts have struggled to explain why most of the strikes have occurred in states where unions are weaker. It could be a function of pay decisions being more local in stronger union states, higher salaries overall, or possibly because states such as California, New York, and Oregon tend to lean Democratic and thus unions there enjoy better relationships with lawmakers.

Narrow Policy Focus

One of the most conspicuous elements of the walkouts is their comparatively narrow focus on school spending, not on other education policies.

It is a strong contrast to the **2012 Chicago strike**, in which issues of teacher seniority and evaluation were front and center, and a sharp turn away from the dominant focus of the past decade.

Evaluation of teachers, in part based on test scores, was unquestionably **a central concern of the Obama administration**. And as the issue gained momentum in states, it was paired with the not-so-subtle implication, fueled by the mainstream media, that too many teachers weren't up to the job.

The new federal law, the Every Student Succeeds Act, **undid requirements related to evaluations**, leaving those decisions up to states. And by focusing on the much more traditional issue of wages, the recent wave of teacher activism could fuel retrenchment.

Notably, the Oklahoma and West Virginia lawmakers who have cut deals with striking teachers haven't tried to attach any performance-related strings to them.

"Even supporters [of teacher-performance policies] want to keep those efforts under the radar screen, and that's why you're not seeing people connecting the issue of teacher compensation and performance in this outbreak of labor unrest," West said.

The tenor of media coverage has changed, too. If it hasn't entirely avoided the temptation to sentimentalize teachers, it has nevertheless succeeded in illustrating the hard realities that teachers in the states with strikes have faced: **disintegrating classrooms, decades-old textbooks, and the necessity of holding second jobs.**

The political implications of the activism, meanwhile, are still unfolding. **Democrats are hoping to capitalize on the momentum** among teachers in the midterm elections, but teacher activism doesn't always fall along traditional political lines.

Take Oklahoma teachers, who lean Republican but clearly don't hold to the state party's anti-tax orthodoxy. In a sense, the striking teachers are displaying their own distinct and independent breed of populism: Automation and trade may not be taking their jobs, but they feel equally left out of the post-2008 economic recovery.

"We've spent 18 months talking about working-class and middle-class Americans who have been overlooked. If you're thinking about those folks, teachers are sort of exhibits 1-A," Hess said.

It's a question few have bothered to ask yet: Are the strikes the beginning of a long-awaited and long-promised renewal of teacher unionism, or are they a crystal-ball glimpse into a world in which grassroots groups, not the teachers' unions, dominate organizing?

On the one hand, the strikes prove how powerful organizing can be. **Activists and unions alike are sharing what they've learned** about new organizing tactics and strategies, which are **heavily dependent on social media** rather than traditional door-knocking.

Texts from West Virginia activist Ryan Frankenberg, in green, to another organizer show the development of the Facebook page that helped fuel a successful strike in the state.

Yet the strikes have been prompted by independent activists—some union members and some not—while the teachers' unions have played an important, but secondary role. They have lent key support, communications assistance, and focus to the protests, but have not been catalysts.

"If we were going to build a movement to have the power to actually get a strike, it had to be bigger than any one organization. It needed to be a place where the grassroots could communicate," said Ryan Frankenberg, a former AFT West Virginia political director and one of the core activists in that state. "Having worked for [a teachers' union] before, I knew they would respond to their membership, and they absolutely did. But you have to have people buying into it for their own reasons before it gets to the organization level."

The relationships between activists and labor unions have often been productive, but they have also generated some tension. In Oklahoma, some teacher-activists are bristling at how the state union's leadership handled the strike and are now calling for impeaching its officers.

The Future of Unions

Where does all that leave unions in general?

"To the extent that the unions are really a viable and important player here, I think the likelihood is that these strikes strengthen the unions," said Bill Raabe, a former longtime National Education Association staffer, now a consultant. "The challenge becomes if the union is viewed as a bit player."

It is not merely an academic question. Bargaining is prohibited in Arizona, while labor-representation fees cannot be collected from nonmembers in Colorado, Oklahoma, or West Virginia. And a looming Supreme Court decision, *Janus v. AFSCME*, **could end unions' ability to charge such fees** for good elsewhere.

So the unions face tough choices, including whether they will move away from the service model that has characterized them for the past few decades (for instance, the emphasis on offering members liability insurance) and **move more fully toward an organizing model**.

If they do, the recent strikes offer clues about some strategies unions might think about emulating, Raabe said, including having a clear, concise message, communicating effectively, and finding those issues that spur teachers to passionate response.

Frankenberry concurred. "I've had this conversation with a couple of labor leaders across the country. Basically my answer is that you have to know your membership and be engaged, and not just through the traditional hierarchical structure. It's easy to fall into that."

There are lessons for the activists to learn from labor, too, noted Julia Koppich, a longtime labor analyst and consultant—like knowing when further wins aren't viable.

"One of the things I learned many, many years ago is when you go on strike, you have to know how you're going to get back in. You have to know when it ends," she said. "I think for the grassroots teachers who want to be in their classrooms teaching, they can't sustain this kind of energy around the fights that need to be had, without at some point the unions being involved."

Staff Writer Madeline Will contributed reporting.

• Editor's Note

Each month the On Target will come out near the end of the month.

If you have something that you would like included, please send as a **Word document** by the 20th of the month to: lpahnek@clarenceschools.org

Items that could be included are: Articles dealing with education/unions, Good ideas for teaching, something humorous/light dealing with education, Information for sharing, Opinion pieces on education, Advertisement for a service you provide.

05/29/2018, 07:04am

Unions, anticipating Janus case Supreme Court loss, jump-start recruiting drives

Lynn Sweet

WASHINGTON – The Supreme Court will rule any day now on Janus v. AFSCME Council 31, the anti-union landmark Illinois case, and the justices are expected to side against government employee unions, breaking 5-4 along Republican and Democratic lines.

Long anticipating an adverse outcome, the public sector unions in Illinois and other states have been ramping up drives to retain members and recruit new ones.

Mary Kay Henry, the International President of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), told the Chicago Sun-Times the union attitude is: “You can’t take us down.”

The key vote will come from Justice Neil Gorsuch, who did not ask any questions during oral arguments on Feb. 26.

Gorsuch, President Donald Trump’s appointee, on the bench only since April 2017, has not voted in prior related cases, which would have tipped his hand. He will shock Supreme Court observers if he backs organized labor in this case.

Either way, the decision in the lawsuit first filed in February 2015 by GOP Gov. Bruce Rauner, will have enormous ramifications for unions. Rauner has made weakening Democratic-allied Illinois public sector unions a crusade.

There is the expectation from labor that if Janus wins, groups, bankrolled by mega donor anti-union conservatives will kick-off off campaigns to persuade government workers to opt-out of unions.

The Janus legal team includes the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation and the Liberty Justice Center in Chicago, controlled by the Illinois Policy Institute, whose funders include a foundation controlled by Lake Forest conservative mega donor Richard Uihlein.

If Janus prevails, “I think we are going to see the beginning of the most aggressive national anti-union campaign that we’ve seen in our generation,” Henry said.

When the Janus opinion is issued, some celebrity appeal to rally union support will roll out, Henry said, from SAG-AFTRA and the NFL players unions to actress Sally Field, who stood on a desk holding a sign simply saying “union” in a powerful iconic scene from her 1979 film, “Norma Rae.”

At issue with Janus case

The legal issue is whether the current fees paid by non-union member Mark Janus to AFSCME Local 2600 violate his first amendment freedom of speech.

Janus is a child support specialist at the State of Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services.

For more than 40 years – since the Supreme Court ruled in the 1977 *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* – the laws in Illinois and 21 other states allow a government worker to not join a union. However, they must pay a “fair share” fee to cover costs for representing them.

That fee does not cover union political or lobbying expenses. The Janus lawyers argued in their brief that the fee Janus pays “subsidizes” an “advocacy organization” that Janus does not support.

Janus pays about \$47 each month to the union compared to member dues of \$60, according to AFSCME Council 31 spokesman Anders Lindall.

Political reality

In the context of political reality, the Janus case free speech argument is the Trojan horse carrying along conservative groups who are intent on eroding the power of the most liberal segments of organized labor.

The Illinois Economic Policy Institute, in a study released May 9, painted a dire picture for government worker unions if Janus prevails.

In 2017, Illinois had 317,000 state and local government union members and would, with a Janus win, lose over a few years 49,000 members, the study estimated.

Unions are “going to take this existential threat and use it as a way to create a stronger union membership,” Robert Bruno, a study co-author, told the Sun-Times. Bruno is the director of the University of Illinois Labor Education Program.

Janus jump-start

To Bruno's point, the public sector unions have already mounted aggressive campaigns to curb defections and sign new members.

The SEIU has its "Together #WeRise drive;" "AFSCME Strong in Illinois" was launched last August.

The unions have been using all their tools: direct personal contact, organizer training, videos, fact sheets, ads, townhalls, flyers and direct mail.

AFSCME Council 31, SEIU Local 73 and the Chicago Teachers Union start out with most of their eligible workers already dues-paying union members.

"In a very real sense, we are taking a very negative situation and remaking it as a way to deepen and strengthen our union and grow even stronger," Lindall said.

AFSCME Council 31 represents more than 70,000 Illinois workers and 90 percent are dues-paying members, Lindall said.

SEIU Local 73 with about 29,000 members in Illinois and northwest Indiana grew by about 800 members between August 2017 and March 2018, according to spokesman Jesus Canchola Sanchez

The Chicago Teachers Union 23,681 members take in 98 percent of eligible Chicago Public Schools workers.

Said CTU communications director Christine Geovanis: "We've been aggressively reaching out to both agency fee payers and CTU members since last September to sign new union cards — and beat back the right wing attempt to undercut our right to fight collectively for our students and our members."

DISCLOSURE NOTE: Some unions have ownership stakes in Sun-Times Media, including the Chicago Federation of Labor; Operating Engineers Local 150; SEIU Healthcare Illinois-Indiana and SEIU Local 1.

Supreme Court sides with employers in class action arbitration cases

By [Ariane de Vogue](#) and [Maegan Vazquez](#), CNN
Updated 11:25 AM ET, Mon May 21, 2018

Washington (CNN) In a victory for employers and the Trump administration, the Supreme Court on Monday said that [employers could block employees](#) from banding together as a class to fight legal disputes in employment arbitration agreements.

Justice Neil Gorsuch delivered the opinion for the 5-4 majority, his first major opinion since joining the court last spring and a demonstration of how the Senate Republicans' move to keep liberal nominee Merrick Garland from being confirmed in 2016 has helped cement a conservative court.

"This is the Justice Gorsuch that I think most everyone expected," said Steve Vladeck, CNN contributor and professor of law at the University of Texas School of Law. "Not only is he endorsing the conservative justices' controversial approach to arbitration clauses, but he's taking it an important step further by extending that reasoning to employment agreements, as well."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg took the rare step of reading her dissent from the bench, calling the majority opinion in *Epic Systems Corp. v. Lewis* "egregiously wrong."

"The court today holds enforceable these arm-twisted, take-it-or-leave-it contracts -- including the provisions requiring employees to litigate wage and hours claims only one-by-one. Federal labor law does not countenance such isolation of employees," she said.

In the majority opinion, Gorsuch maintained the "decision does nothing to override" what Congress has done.

"Congress has instructed that arbitration agreements like those before us must be enforced as written," he said.

As the dissent recognizes, the legislative policy embodied in the (National Labor Relations Act) is aimed at 'safeguard[ing], first and foremost, workers' rights to

join unions and to engage in collective bargaining," he wrote. "Those rights stand every bit as strong today as they did yesterday."

Gorusch, responding to Ginsburg's claim that the court's decision would resurrect so-called "yellow dog" contracts which barred an employee from joining a union, said that "like most apocalyptic warnings, this one proves a false alarm."

The case was the biggest business case of the term, and represented a clash between employers who prefer to handle disputes through arbitration against employees who want to be able to band together to bring their challenges and not be required to sign class action bans.

It also pitted two federal laws against each other.

One, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), gives employees the right to self organization to "engage in concerted activities for the purpose of mutual aid or protection" the other, the 1925 Federal Arbitration Act (FAA) allows employers to "settle by arbitration."

Lawyers for employers, who have long backed arbitration as a means of resolving disputes, argued that class action waivers are permissible under the 1925 law. They say the NLRA does not contain a congressional command precluding enforcement of the waivers.

The Trump administration supported the employers in the case, a switch from the Obama administration's position.

Impact of ruling

"Today's ruling is a major blow for the rights of employees, who almost never have enough of an interest, by themselves, to take the time and resources to litigate claims against their employers -- especially claims concerning underpayment of wages," Vladeck said.

The court has approved some collective action bans in consumer contracts, and employers hoped for the same fate when it comes to employer contracts.

One of the three consolidated cases before the court concerned a grievance claim brought by an employee of a healthcare software company called Epic Systems Corporation. The employee, Jacob Lewis, sought to sue Epic in federal court on behalf of a group of employees who claimed the company had denied

them overtime pay. Epic sought to dismiss the complaint arguing that Lewis had waived his right to pursue joint legal claims.

Neal Katyal, a lawyer for Epic, argued in court papers, "like other contracts, employment contracts may require that arbitration be conducted on an individual basis." Lawyers for the employees, on the other hand, said the NLRA precludes such waivers.

Workers don't like the waivers because it's much more expensive -- and at times intimidating -- to bring individual claims.

The employees have the support of the National Labor Relations Board, an independent federal agency that protects the rights of private sector employees to join together to improve working conditions.

At oral arguments, the justices seemed closely divided along ideological lines. Justice Stephen Breyer worried that if the employers were to prevail they would be "overturning labor law that goes back to, for FDR at least, the entire heart of the New Deal."

At one point, Chief Justice John Roberts asked Ortiz, a lawyer for the workers, whether a decision in his favor would "invalidate agreements covering 25 million employees"

Ortiz said it would.



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THERE IS NO TEACHER SHORTAGE

The problem isn't that there are too few teachers, it's that states are unwilling to pay the market rate...

by NATHAN J. ROBINSON

Today, the New York Times **reports** that some school districts are addressing ongoing “teacher shortages” by importing teachers from abroad, recruiting from countries like the Philippines because immigrants are willing to work for lower salaries. U.S. teachers have been frustrated with their working conditions recently, with some saying “they have had to move in with their parents, apply for food stamps and pay out of pocket for classroom essentials like graph paper and science supplies.” (Hence the **sudden wave** of teacher walkouts in red states.) But the Times says that Filipino recruits are easier to please, even though these immigrants often have to pay exorbitant sums to the companies that exploit—uh, recruit them. One Filipino teacher “said he used savings and a bank loan to pay \$12,500, about three years’ worth of his salary in the Philippines, to Petro-Fil Manpower Services” in exchange for the promise of a job in America.

In recent months you might have heard about a “teacher shortage” in the United States. Forbes **says** the shortage “is one of the gravest problems facing our schools” and that “rising student numbers, low retention rates and difficulties in recruiting new teachers are creating a shortfall of crisis proportions.” Randi Weingarten, head of the American Federation of Teachers, has also used the term, criticizing the use of international recruitment “as a way to solve the teacher shortage.” The Washington Post **has reported** that state government officials of both parties have taken drastic steps to address the Teacher Shortage:

In response, policymakers have taken steps to boost the supply of teachers. In December, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) passed emergency regulations designed to alleviate what he called the “growing crisis” of a statewide teacher shortage by streamlining education requirements for new teachers. Lawmakers in Arizona, Illinois and Minnesota recently took

steps to increase the number of new teachers by lowering the teacher licensure requirements. States such as Oklahoma have staffed classrooms by providing record numbers of temporary emergency certifications. And, motivated in part by a call to ameliorate teacher shortages, New York state recently allowed charter schools to certify their own teachers and dropped literacy tests for teacher candidates.

All of this is puzzling, because there is no teacher shortage in the United States. Instead, state governments are simply unwilling to improve salaries and working conditions to the point where enough people want to be teachers. It's not that there are too few people who can teach, but that states are unwilling to pay the market rate for teacher labor. You can call this a shortage, of course. But the term implies that qualified candidates simply do not exist, and that's not true. There are plenty of people qualified to be teachers. They just don't enter the profession, because states are refusing to compensate them adequately for their services. If this is a "shortage," then I could say there was a "bicycle shortage" in the United States if I was unwilling to pay more than \$5 for a bicycle and nobody would sell me one. It would certainly be true, in that situation, that there is a "shortage" of bicycles available to me. But that has nothing to do with the overall supply of bicycles, of which there are still plenty. (Or I could say there was a "painter shortage" because nobody is willing to paint my house for nine cents while I shout abuse at them.)

If you offered an annual salary of \$1 million to prospective teachers, you'd have plenty of extraordinary applicants to choose from. People would be leaping at the chance to be a teacher. You'd have the country's most qualified college professors lining up to teach middle schoolers. This is because of the labor supply curve:

Pay more money, get more applicants. It doesn't actually have to be \$1 million. It would be enough to make teaching slightly more rewarding and better paying than the other jobs that a qualified person could get. But at the moment, teaching sucks, so nobody wants to do it. In the New York Times report about immigrant teachers, school districts say they "have few other options because they can't find enough American educators willing to work for the pay on offer." Well, yes, you have "few other options" given the "pay on offer." But there is another option: increase the pay on offer!

This is such elementary economics that you'd think it wouldn't need to be said. But look at the Washington Post report on how states are responding to the "shortages."

They notice that they aren't getting many applicants, and what do they do? They reduce the job requirements! Instead of saying "We don't have enough teachers, clearly we're not paying the market rate," they say "We don't have enough teachers, clearly there are just too few qualified people, therefore we should eliminate the literacy requirement so that anyone can be a teacher." You can see what this leads to: teachers remain low-paid and overworked, except now they're illiterate and the schools get worse. The state "solutions" to the "teacher shortage" do not actually increase the number of teachers, if we want to define "teacher" as "someone who is actually capable of teaching." They just widen the category so that a teacher is "anybody willing to sit in a room for six hours while kids look at the ceiling."

Of course, higher pay isn't everything. If it's still a crappy job where people are stressed out and unappreciated, you might have a tough time finding people. (Although again, if you increased the pay sufficiently you'd find qualified people even if the job was terrible.) But the measures the Washington Post cites don't address working conditions or pay, even though these are core factors that will either bring people into the profession or drive them away from it. (An interesting parallel case is the American "doctor shortage." Again, there is no doctor shortage. In wealthy communities, there are doctors everywhere. There are too few doctors in poor communities, though, because poor people can't afford doctors and being a poorly-compensated doctor in an isolated rural community isn't that attractive a career. It could easily be an attractive career, though, if we subsidized it sufficiently. These shortages are an unwillingness to invest in creating attractive jobs, not a lack of potential labor.)

Discussions of teacher shortages have dismissed the simple economic point. Here's the Atlantic talking about state proposals to raise pay in order to increase recruitment:

But it's hard to say whether such proposals will ultimately have long-lasting impact on the general teacher shortage. Surveys suggest that although teachers' job satisfaction **has declined significantly in recent years**, their perceptions about pay have hardly changed; factors beyond money contribute to the recruitment-and-turnover problems. In places already struggling with shortages and those resorting to mass emergency certifications, the challenge is finding new teachers who are qualified, competent, and dedicated to the profession. Achieving this goal, researchers say, is complicated—something that a few extra hundred, or even thousand, dollars alone won't solve. "If you want to improve the pipeline of new teachers, you have to start

early,” said Sean Corcoran, an associate professor of educational economics at NYU who has conducted extensive research on the U.S. teaching force. “Raising salaries today is not going to increase the quality of recruits tomorrow.”

Corcoran is wrong. Raising salaries today could increase the quality of recruits instantaneously, if you raised them enough. If an extra “few hundred” or “thousand” dollars won’t help, that’s not because this is about “more than money” but because teachers are significantly underpaid. Try doubling their pay. Then I bet you’d see quite a few bright and qualified new applicants all of a sudden! (Also: the fact that their “perceptions about pay” have hardly changed does not mean money doesn’t matter. If you don’t believe me, as I say, try offering enormous piles of cash to whoever is willing to be a teacher.)

The Times quotes a Phoenix-area school district’s human resources director justifying the importation of teachers: “In these times, you have to be innovative and creative in recruiting.” She may be right, if you take the “times” as a given. But the question is: why are we in times like these? Why has it become necessary to do this? And the answer is: because state governments are controlled by rich people, who do not care about children and are unwilling to make financial sacrifices so that teachers can have good careers and poor kids can have good schools. The “shortage” is not inevitable. It’s the product of austerity, and austerity is a policy choice. It’s depressing to me that the head of the teacher’s union would concede the idea that there is a “shortage.” I understand that she wants to pressure states to end the shortage by increasing pay, but we don’t have to use this propaganda term in order to make that argument. Like the Social Security “crisis,” this is a manufactured emergency that only exists because of inequality. Most of our problems, from too few doctors to too few teachers to too little money in the retirement fund, could be solved if wealth were distributed properly and fairly and governments were willing to give institutions the funding they actually needed in order to carry out their social missions.



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