

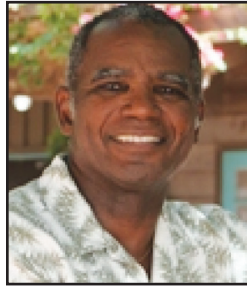
THE ADVOCATE

NEA recognizes SDEA's success in organizing

SDEA Members—

We hope all of you had a wonderful holiday season and will have a safe and prosperous 2012. As the new year begins, we leave behind many accomplishments, and continue to face many challenges in public education across the nation. We must not lose sight of our accomplishments, as they give us hope and encouragement for our future. Our victories in 2011 include: thwarting the undemocratic “San Diegans 4 Great Schools” school takeover ballot initiative; organizing nearly 50 school rallies involving more than 10,000 participants to protest the School Board’s unnecessary layoff of more than 1,300 educators; successfully battling roughly 1,200 of those layoffs to date without making contract concessions we knew were unnecessary; filing for union recognition at three more San Diego charter schools; and most recently, working with parents to quash the District’s ill-conceived school closure plan.

Our accomplishments have not gone unnoticed by other labor



Letters in Solidarity

Bill Freeman
SDEA President

Camille Zombro
SDEA Vice President



organizations. Education unions across the country are working to make the transformation that SDEA has made over the past five years—moving from a culture wherein members see the union as an outside entity that provides services as needed (the “service model”) to a culture where all of us understand that *we are the union* (the “organizing model”).

As NEA works with their affiliates in transforming from a service model to an organizing model, SDEA has been requested to teach other state associations how we were able to successfully make this shift. In addition to a series of presentations by SDEA to union leaders around the country this fall, NEA recently requested that SDEA provide a hands-on organizing

training at their Pacific Regional Conference in February. Fifty SDEA members will conduct the training alongside 50 attendees from our neighboring states.

The great work by SDEA members in fighting back the hostile attacks on public schools and protecting the great education we provide daily to our students truly deserves recognition by both CTA and NEA. Our local struggles are contextualized within the broader reality of ongoing state and national attacks on public education and teachers. This was evident recently when District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis unveiled her

“plan” to reform SDUSD should she be elected as Mayor of San Diego. In a familiar tone, she proposes changing the School Board composition, bargaining procedures, and other changes espoused by “San Diegans 4 Great Schools” and their ilk. Similarly, our schools continue to face threats from outside fake grassroots organizations such as “Up for Ed” who are working to see our public schools dismantled under the cynically misnamed Parent “Empowerment” law. Clearly our work never ends.

Our hope is that we can play a role in helping other education

See NEA, page 2

In Solidarity,

Bill Freeman
Bill Freeman
SDEA President

Camille Zombro
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SDEA Vice President

**Contract
Corner**

**Strengthening
our union by
protecting our
contract**

Facebook: Teacher's friend or foe?

Widely-utilized social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can enrich our lives, facilitate communication, and have very useful classroom applications. Social media can provide educators a way to connect with students and parents more effectively. In this technology-saturated era, it is imperative to be aware that something that seems quite mundane and innocuous, such as a Facebook

posting, could have repercussions that affect an educator's employment status.

As a general rule, public employees do have a right to “constitutionally-protected free speech activities,” and public school employers cannot punish nor discipline employees for engaging in such activities. However, employers may have the right to restrict the speech of their employees off-campus if they

See MEDIA, page 2

Media

Cont. from p. 1
are speaking on a public or private matter as an employee of a school district.

Lately, courts have seen the Internet as part of the public arena, and have ruled that not all speech in the public arena is protected speech if one is a public school employee.

The courts have found that it is reasonable for school officials to expect an educator with supervisory authority over students to maintain a professional and respectful association with those students. Educators should not communicate with students, whether online, via texts, or through other electronic means, as if they were their peers, since it could disrupt the learning

atmosphere of the school. In addition, some courts have found that public blogs or posts online that contain *highly personal and vituperative* (as opposed to general) comments about the employer, peers, students, and/or parents, can fatally undermine the educator's ability to enter into trusting relationships with others. This conduct has been used as the basis for discipline.

Educators are also held to a high standard of moral and professional conduct in their private lives. Certain conduct and speech is deemed "immoral and/or unprofessional" under the California Education Code (Section 44932), and has led to educators being disciplined or fired in recent years.

Remember, anything you post online will exist in

perpetuity, so use common sense. Never put in electronic form anything that you do not want viewed by millions of people. Most social media sites allow you to adjust privacy settings; set them on the highest level possible. Also, the use of pseudonyms has not protected educators from discipline or discharge in past cases. If you are using social media for educational purposes, use a separate account, especially if it is for communicating with students and parents. Be aware of the unintended audience, even on sites that you are strictly using for educational purposes. The best rule of thumb is to keep it professional and strictly related to educational matters. A healthy dose of caution can go a long way in protecting your career.

NEA

Cont. from p. 1
unions to organize so that they too can successfully mobilize our fellow educators. We all know that this will take a lot of time, effort and resources. But unless major change occurs across the nation, public education will continue to move along its current trajectory—a direction which threatens the future of our students and our profession. It's up to us to be the change we seek. Let's ensure that 2012 is another successful year by continuing to do great work with our students, parents and the community.

Spring Election Announcement The spring SDEA election for the SDEA Board and delegates to CTA State Council and NEA-RA will be held March 5-16, and will be conducted via paper ballots which will be mailed to members' home and/or site. Materials for the election are available for download at www.sdea.net/about/sdea-elections.

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