

TO: NEA Leadership and Management
FROM: VSO
SUBJECT: VSO Membership re: NEASO Negotiations

An Injury to One is an Injury to All

We are the staff that support Vermont Educators. We also give freely of our time to others, stepping away from our own roles, to support the development of other UniServ and organizing staff. We step away from our own roles to participate in trainings to improve our skills in advocating and organizing for our membership. We take on this additional work and responsibility due to our absolute commitment to unionism that is intentionally inclusive and acknowledges that members must lead their own union and stand up for what is just. **Watching the nation's largest union employ disgusting union-busting tactics like locking out workers makes a mockery of what unionism is all about.**

In numerous aspects of our work to support members of Vermont-NEA, we also work closely with NEASO staff. Meanwhile, 25% of NEASO members must work a second job while employed by NEA simply to afford the cost of living in the DC Metropolitan area.

Our work cannot be successful without NEASO colleagues. We know for a fact that:

1. NEASO members and NEA Facilitators work with NEA members and staff nationwide to build powerful state and local affiliates. This is not possible if NEASO staff cannot win a contract that sustains their basic needs.
2. NEASO members are the first point of contact for participants in events and conferences. Their expertise and experience are essential in guaranteeing those events are successful.
3. NEASO members ensure that imperative union training can happen. Without them there would be no registration forms or webpages, no communications to participants, no travel or logistic support, no meals, no vouchers, and no resources available to the staff and members to attend and participate in healthy and meaningful ways.
4. Stagnant wages and bad-faith bargaining jeopardize staff recruitment and retention. All our affiliates are served and made better thanks to the skilled and experienced NEASO staff that help advance the mission of our organization.
5. NEASO's bargaining demands mirror the same issues we fight for with our members: dignified wages, salary steps, and the need to have agency over their working conditions.

VT-NEA has repeatedly relied on NEA staff to enhance and support the representation and other essential services we provide our members. At our most recent ESP conference, NEASO Members supplied countless resources, provided invaluable help in leading sessions, and went above-and-beyond to facilitate networking conversations and assist with tabling events that allowed us to

reach a wider range of members -- many from categories who are too often made to feel dismissed or forgotten. Likewise, remarkable improvements to VT-NEA's website and communication protocols with new members have all been made possible because of the important work that NEASO members do.

Additionally, VT-NEA recently launched an Educators' Bill of Rights Campaign. This campaign reflects the same demands that NEASO is bringing to the bargaining table: thriving wages, time to collaborate and plan with colleagues, and safe working conditions. We have reached out to NEA staff for support throughout this campaign. Though as NEASO members are locked out, our ability to obtain additional resources and support structures from the National level is unduly hindered.

VSO also recently wrapped up bargaining with our own Board of Directors. During that process, VSO and Vermont-NEA agreed to salary improvements and language changes that will enable this staff to better support our VT-NEA members. A fair and mutually beneficial settlement was reached in a reasonable timeframe because we sat across from a Board of Directors who bargained in good faith. We must all insist that NEA exhibit the same union values by going back to the table and committing to act in good faith as well.

In our roles as staff, we often teach about the history of labor and the importance of collective action. We know *'bad boss'* tactics when we see them. This should never have to be said, but clearly it must: **It's time for NEA to stop acting like a bad boss.** A lockout, where the employer simply refuses to allow workers to work, is a tactic only used by the most egregious, union-busting management teams. Such a scheme is insidious, and sadly places NEA squarely alongside many of the most atrociously anti-union employers in the nation. This approach is clearly intended to scare employees into capitulation. NEA's repeated, incessant demand that NEASO members submit to terms that clearly do not meet their material needs is the antithesis of good faith collective bargaining and is an affront to NEA's purported core value of collective action. **Threatening to cut off the health insurance of employees, their spouses, and even their children, which NEA said will occur at the end of this month, is a monstrous and unforgiveable act.**

It is radically disheartening and demoralizing to see messages from NEA management that are designed to turn members against NEASO staff. NEA management has made a habit of concealing from NEA members some of their most hideous actions, including their unlawful unilateral changes in working conditions regarding items like holiday pay, and failure to address the \$50 million in outsourcing of bargaining unit work. How can a powerful union like NEA claim to be a champion of working people and union rights as they simultaneously pursue attacks on workers who are merely trying to make modest improvements in their lives? How do we jointly build a foundation on a set of shared worker values when the national organization so flagrantly disrespects their own employees? How can we expect our calls for justice to be taken seriously if we do not all act with integrity? Union power is fundamentally rooted in a dedication to fairness, unity, and respect for all workers. We hold *ourselves* to these principles and **we demand that you reflect these principles in your actions by ending this unethical lock-out and negotiating a just contract for NEA staff.**

Accordingly, we expect that NEA change course and model the sentiment messaged below:



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When we fight together, we win together. [#OnStrikeSummer](#)

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114



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In ABSOLUTE and TOTAL Solidarity with NEASO,

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