

Statement by Judy Liegmann
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I am here because I feel that the CTA union has gone too far this time.

I am outraged by their apparent assumption that we teachers should be an obedient and docile source of funding for any political purpose union officials happen to set their minds to. This contemptuous attitude toward us teachers is manifested clearly in their assault on our freedom of speech and personal property, in the form of an arbitrary additional dues assessment, in order to finance their political agenda.

Our earliest Founding Documents in this country make it clear that no person should be required to forfeit the fruit of his or her labor to fund the political objectives of others. We teachers need to have the protections of the Constitution in the face of coercive, intimidating power.

I had a taste of the CTA's tactics of intimidation last Thursday when we announced our lawsuit in Sacramento. I could not believe my ears when a large crowd of union operatives began to scream at us and chant at the top of their voices. The bedlam did not abate for the entire 20 minutes we attempted to share our concerns with the public.

I am especially disgusted with the stealthy way the CTA officials planned the timing of the vote to add this extra dues burden onto us teachers. Apparently union officials made their decision on June 11 – the time when we teachers are working at full speed to finish the school year, completing our grades and report cards, filling out endless paperwork, cleaning and ordering our classrooms, and saying good-bye to the students who have learned to love and trust us during the past school year.

The last thing we teachers are paying attention to, at a time like that, is the possibility that our union officials might be positioning themselves to start seizing an additional \$60 from each of us, beginning with the new school year!

So here we teachers stand, all 335,000 of us, *still* not having been given a disclosure of the forced dues deduction that will show up on our paychecks in two days. To most, it will come as a big surprise to learn that millions of dollars have been taken from them to fight a political battle.

I am sure that a large number of my fellow California teachers share my desire for political autonomy, for the freedom to make our own choices, issue by issue and candidate by candidate, where we want to put our own money to work in the public forum.

Individual convictions, although not considered important by the California Teacher Association officials, are an essential element of our democracy, and they must be protected and guarded with great care. For this reason, we beg the court to put a “wall of separation” between the union and our pocketbooks!

Our basic freedoms are at stake, and it is high time that a limit is set on the power that union officials wield over our professional and financial lives.