



As NEA Meets Challenges, We Grow Stronger

Few years in NEA's long history were more momentous or challenging than 2012.

As the year began, public education and our members faced attacks on many fronts. The U.S. economy still struggled to regain solid footing after the worst recession since the Great Depression. And of course, the 2012 elections presented voters with a pivotal choice about the direction of our country.

Today we can take pride in knowing that NEA rose to meet each of these challenges, thanks to your hard work, sacrifices and commitment.

We didn't win every battle to defend public education, but each fight made us stronger and pulled us together. We found new allies and sharpened our strategies. We realize that we can't defeat bad ideas simply by saying no, so we are working harder than ever to develop policies that really help students succeed, while respecting the professionalism of educators. These efforts will serve us well in years to come.

The U.S. economy isn't entirely out of the woods, either, but things are looking up. Employment is rising, home values are bouncing back, and state and local revenues are recovering from the sharp declines that devastated education budgets and cost so many education jobs. Those layoffs of educators were reflected in our membership, which dropped over the past two years after decades of growth. With our survival hanging in the balance, NEA tightened our belts and focused our resources on our most important priorities. Again, these actions will only make us stronger in the future.

NEA was involved in the 2012 elections like never before, with tens of thousands of our members embracing the role of activists online, at phone banks, and in face-to-face conversations with voters. When the results were in, we had helped re-elect President Obama and other friends of public education, from Congress to statehouses to local school boards. And the American people had spoken, loudly and clearly, against extremism and in favor of economic fairness.

So where do we go now? We know that attacks on public education will continue, and we'll continue to push back against simplistic solutions like vouchers and the misuse of multiple choice tests. We will continue to advocate forcefully for equitable resources and research-based education policies. And even as layoffs subside, we'll fight to put those who lost their jobs back to work, so they can provide more services to students.

Finally, we will honor and continue NEA's proud tradition of fighting for social justice on issues like voting rights and immigration reform. We have always fought these battles because, as educators, we believe strongly in opportunity and equality. We aren't about to stop now.

Dennis Van Roekel, *president*