

## PURPOSE

NEA Board of Directors created the Friend of Education Award as an annual recognition of a person, organization or group whose leadership, acts, and support have contributed to the improvement of American education on a national level. Past recipients include U.S. Presidents, a Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, a Supreme Court Justice, U.S. Senators and Representatives, Governors, educators, civil rights leaders, journalists, authors, and an athlete.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The NEA priorities for 2025-2026 focuses on advancing Racial Justice in Education, promoting a safe, healthy, inclusive public schools, improve the well-being of educators, supporting professional excellence, improve student learning and create strong public schools. In alignment with these goals, a duly nominated individual, organization or group shall have significantly contributed to the advancement of public education through exhibited leadership, acts, and support of education on a national level, that establishes the nominee as a friend of education, education employees, and/or students. A nominee doesn't have to be an American citizen, but should reflect philosophies and principles that advance NEA's mission, priorities, and strategic goals.

## NOMINATIONS

Any member of the National Education Association or any local or state affiliate of NEA may nominate an individual, organization or group to the Friend of Education Award Committee by completing a nomination form and submitting it to the NEA by **January 30, 2026**. Each nomination must be signed and submitted by an NEA member. Non-NEA members are not eligible as nominators.

## SELECTION OF RECIPIENT

The Friend of Education Award Committee, composed of six members of the NEA Board of Directors, will review each duly submitted nomination and recommend a recipient to the NEA Board of Directors for approval.

## PRESENTATION

The presentation of the Friend of Education Award is a scheduled event at the annual NEA Representative Assembly, and is made to the award recipient by the NEA President.

## SUBMISSION DEADLINE

**The deadline for receiving nominations for the 2026 NEA Friend of Education Award is January 30, 2026.** Nominations must be signed and include proof of the nominator's NEA membership or affiliation. Completed nomination forms, together with all accompanying materials, should be emailed to Tina Paden at ([tpaden@nea.org](mailto:tpaden@nea.org)).

# FRIEND OF EDUCATION PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS

1972 Lyndon B. Johnson

1973 Abraham A. Ribicoff

1974 Carl D. Perkins

1975 Terry Sanford

1976 Roy Wilkins

1977 Hubert H. Humphrey

1978 Joan Ganz Cooney

1979 Thurgood Marshall

1980 Jimmy Carter

1981 George McGovern

1982 Arthur S. Flemming

1983 Frosty Troy

1984 Robert T. Stafford

1985 Barbara Parker

1986 Christa McAuliffe

1987 Ernest Boyer

1988 Augustus F. Hawkins

1989 Mary Hatwood Futrell

1990 Claiborne Pell

1991 Alan Page

1992 Jonathan Kozol

1993 John S. Hendricks

1994 David Berliner

1995 Richard W. Riley

1996 William Jefferson Clinton

1997 James B. Hunt

1998 Zell Miller

1999 Hillary Rodham Clinton

2000 Edward M. Kennedy

2001 Morris Dees

2002 James Jeffords

2003 Paul Wellstone

2004 Marian Wright Edelman

2005 Cheryl Brown Henderson

2006 The Tom Joyner Foundation

2007 Nancy Pelosi

2008 Barbara Morgan

2009 Linda Darling-Hammond

2010 Diane Ravitch

2011 The "Wisconsin 14"

2012 Dr. Paul Krugman

2013 Patty Murray

2014 Malala Yousafzai

# FRIEND OF EDUCATION PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS

2015

Paula Kerger

2015

Patricia de Stacy Harrison

2016

Senator Lamar Alexander

2016

Senator Patty Murray

2017

LeVar Burton

2018

Ted Dintersmith

2019

Dolores McCracken (Posthumously)

2020

Greta Thunberg

2021

Judith (Judy) Heumann

2022

Dolly Parton

2023

Quinta Brunson

2024

American Library Association

2025

Dr. Josh Cowen