

Richland Reporter

Newsletter of the
Richland Federation
of Teachers & School Employees
Louisiana Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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Teacher tenure is under attack in Louisiana

A highly profiled and controversial report from the National Council on Teacher Quality was extremely critical of Louisiana's teacher tenure laws. Based on that report, we may see legislative efforts to water down the protection that tenure provides for teachers.

The concept of teacher tenure is under attack in Louisiana and across the nation. A recent, suspect report from the National Council for Teacher Quality identified tenure as "complicit" in keeping "ineffective teachers" in the classroom.

One of the offensive and misleading passages in the NCTQ report claimed that "Louisiana's probationary period for new teachers is just three years and the state does not require any meaningful process to evaluate cumulative effectiveness in the classroom before teachers are awarded tenure."

After reading that study, State Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek told a reporter, "The finding that tenure is granted in

Louisiana based on the passage of time, not on the quality of the teacher, is a fair criticism."

Pastorek's communications director took the next logical step, telling the reporter, "It's a possibility that there will be legislation on tenure. We're looking at exploring that, examining the pluses and minuses. We're not ruling that out."

What is tenure, and why is it important?

Teacher tenure exists for two essential reasons: to protect educators from political or personal retribution and to guarantee their academic freedom to teach according to the best practices in their fields of expertise.

Tenure does not guarantee lifetime employment. It does not protect the unqualified or incompetent individuals.

IT'S MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION IS TO PROVIDE DUE PROCESS!

What is the NCTQ's complaint about tenure?

The executive summary of the NCTQ study includes at least one very loaded sentence: "The state should require that tenure decisions be meaningful." There is room for much mischief in the statement.

While teachers who have gone through Louisiana's tenure process would disagree, our state does not meet NCTQ's "goals" for meaningful tenure. Those goals are:

- A teacher should be eligible for tenure after a certain number of years of service, but tenure should not be granted automatically at that juncture.
- The state should articulate a process, such as a hearing, that local districts must administer in considering the evidence and deciding whether a teacher should receive tenure.
- Evidence of effectiveness should be the preponderant criterion in tenure decisions.
- The minimum years of service needed to achieve tenure should allow sufficient data to be accumulated on which to base tenure decisions; five years is the ideal minimum.

How will the LFT respond?

- Given what we already know about the priorities of the current administration, we must prepare for an agenda that is not in the best interests of our schools, our children or our profession. Given what we already know about the priorities of the current administration, we must prepare for an agenda that is not in line with LFT's call for a bolder, broader approach to public education.
- Teacher tenure is a vital protection, and a key professional right. The Louisiana Federation of Teachers will vigorously fight any efforts to water down the state's tenure law. We will wage this battle in the context of our call for a bolder, broader approach to public education.
- The Federation has essentially been engaged in a campaign to recover that forgotten message. A Nation at Risk was not a warning to just educators and policy makers. It was a warning and challenge to "all of us" to create and support a "learning society" through a commitment to high quality, life long education for all.

In closing, tenure is not the problem. The problem is that we have approached our nation at risk from a school reform only perspective. This approach produced new standards, tests, and consequences, but did not address a new vision of education that views education as a shared responsibility.

What is the SREB Average?

The Southern Regional Educational Board represents 16 states with at least four members from each state, the governor and their appointees, The southern regional average which is set up by each state is driven from data collected from individual local school boards.

In Louisiana the southern regional average is based upon **ALL CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES**. This includes teachers, administrators at school sites, office administration in central office, and superintendents at each local. **This heavily skews the actual salaries of teachers when reporting their salaries to the state.**

How does that affect you?

First, it makes it easier for teachers to reach the southern regional average when the state gives pay raises, so they do not have to continue giving raises in the future.

Secondly, once a school district reaches the southern regional average, any growth money will no longer have to go to teachers. It will be left up to the school board members as to how they will spend it.

- **Is it fair** that the administrators who make the big bucks are allowed to be in the formula that skews the figuring of the average teacher salary?
- **Is it fair** that the same administrators take advantage of the growth money to spend more money in administration?
- **Is it fair** the governor and politicians can use this skewed average not to give raises in the future?

We all need to pull our heads out of the sand and start paying attention as to how we are being manipulated in the old political arena. It is time to get active in our up-and-coming legislative session to help protect our rights.



Get Active!
Just go to <http://la.aft.org>
and click on
“Sign up with LFT Action Center”

The Richland Federation Has a Website.
Visit us at <http://la.aft.org/rftse>



Join The Organization Working For YOU!!!!



To Join the RFT/SE, Fill Out Application and Mail to the Richland Federation Payroll Deduction Authorization Richland Parish School Board

I hereby authorize the Richland Parish School Board to deduct in 12 equal installments, from each of my paychecks, current dues for the Richland Federation of Teachers & School Employees.

This authorization shall remain in effect until revoked by me through proper written notice to the Parish School Board Payroll Department and the RFT/SE.

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Address		City State Zip
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School	Job Title	
Signature	Social Security Number	

Date _____ Dues (circle one)
Teacher: \$30.00 School Employee: \$10.50
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