

Jewish Community Relations Council

Nation's largest union votes down anti-Israel resolutions

By Daniel Pearlman, JCRC Director

The National Education Association (NEA), the nation's largest professional employee organization, recently debated two anti-Israel resolutions at its annual conference. Neither resolution passed.

In early July, two anti-Israel “new business items,” or resolutions, were slated for consideration at NEA's annual conference, the Representative Assembly. One of these, New Business Item 29, called on NEA to express its “support for the Palestinian struggle” against Israel and accused Israel of “ethnic cleansing.” This new business item was voted down decisively, with 77% of delegates voting against and only 23% in favor. The second resolution, New Business Item 51, which called for the NEA to officially partner with the inflammatory anti-Israel campaign, “No Way to Treat a Child,” was tabled and sent to committee

because members ran out of time to debate all new business items. It is likely that committee members will determine that NEA should take none of the actions proposed by the new business item. For the issue to come up again next year, somebody would have to propose it again.

As the largest union in the United States with over three million members, these resolutions would have had a chilling effect on Jewish teachers, parents, and children if they had passed. Following the defeat of New Business Item 29, the Jewish community has an opportunity to make a difference opposing future anti-Zionist resolutions considered by teachers' unions around the country. NEA members are public school teachers and other support personnel, faculty, and staffers at colleges and universities; retired educators; and college students preparing to become teachers.

“The New Business Items presented at the NEA Representative Assembly are not indicative of the NEA stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” explained Dan Greenberg, a member of the Board of Directors for both the Ohio Education Association and the NEA, as well as President of the Sylvania Education Association. “NEA has over three million members, and the two New Business Items were brought to the delegation by just 50 members for each item. The one item that was debated was soundly defeated and leaders from state affiliates, including Ohio, were clear in their opposition.”

Before the NEA conference began, the Ohio delegation held a meeting to discuss the two resolutions. They took a stance opposing both New Business Items 29 and 51, with over 90% of the Ohio delegates voting to oppose these anti-Israel resolutions.

At around this time, JCRC informed select local teachers about these anti-Israel resolutions and encouraged them to vote against them at the annual conference.

With affiliate organizations in every state and in more than 14,000 communities across the United States, the NEA is committed to advancing the cause of public education and opportunity for all students. “While I wholeheartedly wish that my fellow NEA members would not seek to entangle NEA in a highly sensitive, divisive topic such as this,” Dan reflected, “I am extremely proud of the way the vote went and the overwhelming opposition from my friends and colleagues in Ohio.”

If you have any questions or would like to get involved in JCRC's Israel advocacy and engagement work, please contact Daniel Pearlman, JCRC Director, at 419-724-0315 or daniel@jewishtoledo.org.
