

RESPONDING TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

“Costs too much. I can’t afford it.”

- When I first became a member, I thought so too. Then I realized that I could never negotiate raises or health insurance on my own. We do better when we stand together.
- Quote dues in lowest terms—per day, pay period, week, etc.
- “What can you buy for about only \$2 a day?” Equate daily amount to what that amount would buy: less than the cost of a coffee, a movie, a six-pack of soda or beer, etc.
- List protections members get 365 days a year for about only \$2 per day in dues: lobbying, monitoring of state and federal agencies, contract, enforcement, bargaining, precedent-setting legal cases, legal defense for members which prevents others from having to face the same thing, etc.
- “Legal bills are so costly. If you needed an attorney to defend you against charges such as DCF child abuse or neglect, etc., would you be prepared to pay the bill? Keep in mind that private attorneys charge hundreds of dollars per hour.”
- Save through member only group buying. Show ways you save. “In fact, membership can actually save you money if you take advantage of member discount opportunities.”

“Why should I join? I can get it for nothing.”

- Not true. There are services non-members can’t access such as representation in DCF investigations, workers’ compensation cases, termination hearings, nonrenewal hearings, advice on certification, unemployment appeals, etc. Additionally, dues payment entitles members to vote, hold office, attend meetings, and be represented on matters in addition to those covered by the negotiated agreement. It also entitles them to liability insurance and buying privileges reserved for members.
- “No one gets it for free. Your colleagues in the Local, State and National Association are paying the tab. It’s not fair for you to get a significant benefit for free that others are paying for.”
- “It costs money to represent employees. All who benefit should share that expense.”
- We should all be working together to make our organization the very best it can be at representing all of us (for locals that do have fair share or agency fee agreements).
- As a member, you can take an active part in decision making, vote, hold office, and have a voice in a democratic, representative organization.
- “If something happens to you and you need the Association, it would be too late to join and obtain assistance automatically provided to Association members.”

“I don’t agree with (fill in the blank) of the Association.”

- “Few people agree 100% with any group or organization’s actions. But representative government in organizations as well as nations depends on people who ‘pay their dues’ and who participate in decision making. If you don’t agree with some direction the Association is taking, join, become active, and work to change its course.”
- “Our Association is democratically run—no member is required to agree with the majority on every issue. But every member has a chance to try to sway the majority through representative democratic governance structures at every level of the Association. Furthermore, our representative bodies issue the recommendations of the majority; the Association doesn’t attempt to speak for every individual member in every decision.”
- “What if taxpayers in the district could elect not to pay taxes voted in because they objected to something or because they do not have children in schools or public universities.”
- Emphasize the democratic nature of the organization.
- Compare to taxation, services such as water, fire, trash collection, parks, security. One pays one’s share even when one disagrees or does not use the services.



- Explain the Position. If it's a resolution, explain that a resolution is reviewed each year by the Representative Assembly, Council, etc. Resolutions are initiated by members and voted on by the Assembly of their elected representatives. Introduce the prospect to his/her Local Representative who was in on the decision.
- "In order to be get involved, be informed, find out what is happening, and work for change you must be a member."
- Some positions do not affect us on a day-to-day basis. The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages of one or two things we do not like or agree with.
- If the objection is to our protecting a "bad" employee, point out that we do not hire, fire, evaluate or judge an employee. It is our responsibility to give each employee a "day in court." Point out that rights, like laws, must be enforced for each individual or they will not exist for all. Cite cases.
- "Do you agree with everything the Legislature or Congress does? But you don't drop your citizenship, give up the right to vote, or refuse to pay your taxes just because those bodies may take actions with which you disagree."

"I'd join the Local (or Local/State) but not NEA"

- We get a lot from our partnership with CEA and NEA. Only the tip of the iceberg shows here at the Local. Our Local, along with the State and National, is constantly working to protect, promote and strengthen members' rights. Some unified programs are:
 - UniServ
 - Legal Services
 - Instruction and Professional Development
 - Bargaining Assistance
 - Economic Services
 - Human and Civil Rights
 - Staff assistance at conferences, workshops
 - Offices, secretaries, paper, postage, telephone, etc.
 - Grants, Scholarships and Awards
- "How would you be affected if a colleague had a problem and no one had resources or simply chose not to fight it?" Precedents set in other cases affect all of us.
- Don't agree. Don't argue.
- "I don't like unions."
- "What do you think of when you say union?" Explain that union means "joining together for a common cause." It's about all of us working together.
- Cite professional development; community action; child protection; help for parents; available workshops; conferences on professional issues such as stress, discipline, censorship, etc.
- What would the effect be if no union existed to monitor, lobby, represent, enforce policies and contracts, and ensure due process? Cite records of local/state/national Associations.

"We shouldn't be involved in politics."

- Every decision about every brick, book, test, standard and educational employee is made by persons elected to public office or appointed or hired by those persons. We are involved in the political arena. Education is politics. Our only decision is whether we use our voice to affect the outcome.
- Direct political contributions are only made from voluntary contributions and are kept entirely separate from dues.
- Policy directly impacts teacher working conditions and student learning conditions. Teachers must be involved in shaping policy decisions around our pensions, evaluation system, tenure, testing, etc., or else someone else will make those decisions without our input.



“The Association doesn’t do anything for kids and education.”

- Share information about CEA’s history of fighting to protect teacher pensions, increased funding to ensure quality educators’ working conditions and students’ learning conditions, leading the charge to focus on learning over testing and much more.
- Share information about Local activities to promote quality education and to benefit students.
- Share information on PD (Professional Development), lobbying activities on behalf of education, legislative goals and programs to benefit and improve education, organizational goals, programs and activities that support education.
- Share information about the \$1 per member of NEA dues set aside to deal with the problem of school dropouts.

“I don’t need a union.”

- Without a union, teachers would not have a voice in the workplace, and the employer would have carte blanche to set wages and benefits, length of work day and work year, without teacher input or negotiation.
- “How would you know if you were getting a fair salary and benefits if you had to negotiate with the district as an individual?”
- “What would you do if you were being unjustly investigated by the DCF for alleged abuse or neglect? Would you be prepared to cover the legal fees? It is extremely likely that you or someone you know will be involved in a DCF investigation. As a member, you would have access to representation by CEA attorneys who have handled hundreds of DCF cases.” Point out how the Association, over the years, has obtained through bargaining and legislative action:
 - Pension systems
 - Sick leave; maternity leave, other leaves
 - Continuing contract laws and other laws and contract provisions guaranteeing fairness in dismissals
 - Salaries and other benefits
 - In-service training
- Make an appeal based on how the Association can benefit his/her colleagues in a collective sense, e.g. increased salaries, better health insurance benefits, better working conditions, etc.
- “My spouse belongs, so I don’t need to.”
- If one belongs, only one gets the benefits of membership; only one gets liability insurance; only one gets representation available to members only; if affected by layoff, only one gets representation beyond contractual provisions.
- Both are affected by legislation and monitoring activities to stop anti-education employee, anti-public education attacks.
- Both get salary increases and bargained benefits.
- Legal representation is costly. Would you both be prepared to pay for attorneys to defend yourself?”
- You were not hired because you were a couple. Each must stand on his/her own. You are both important members of the unit. We all need participation from both of you—on the job and in the Association.

“I don’t like (past or present) leaders.”

- Get more involved. Use your voice.
- They are elected by means of open nominations and secret ballot by majority vote — one person, one vote proportional representation.
- What should we start/stop/continue doing?



- If current leader, schedule him/her to follow up.
- Pick up the individual and take her/him to the meeting with you.
- “Get involved and help make things better.”
- “We don’t need it this year.” (Nonbargaining year)
- What happens in neighboring districts and states affects us when we bargain next time (e.g., rollbacks, strikes, arbitrations, legal cases, unfair decisions, etc.).
- Programs go on all the time:
 - Research
 - Training of leaders and bargaining team
 - Office maintenance
 - Staff salaries, travel, etc.
 - Staff training
 - Lobbying
 - Monitoring of state and federal agencies
 - Monitoring retirement funds
 - Legislative program
 - Community relations
 - Education employee image programs
 - Contract enforcement

“Disgruntled...”

- “I understand that.”
- “You’re right. Now what can we do?”
- “Nothing can change that. Now we are...”
- “A lot of US used to feel that way.”
- “We’re working/investing this year so we will be strong next.”
- “If we don’t stand up for (ourselves/members), who will? The board? The administration/regents? The Legislature?”
- “What are you willing to do to change it?”
- If the problem is a poor record in the past, especially in bargaining, acknowledge it if it’s true. Then move prospect to
 - joining to help improve it or cite positive gains in most recent bargaining. “We’re doing a lot now.”
- “What can we do to ensure better results this time?”
- “I don’t know how long I’ll be working here.” (Leaving employment or retiring soon)
- Cite this prospect’s investment compared to those of veteran members.
- “You may choose to stay or return. Salary and working conditions will improve while you’re gone.”
- “You’ll benefit from the support of Association members.”
- “We monitor retirement funds, insurance, etc.”
- “Your retirement depends upon salary gains these last years. We need your support to get maximum gains.”
- “Join now and stay involved through NEA-Retired. You’ll not only remain a vital part of education, but the
 - Association and NEA-Retired will continue to work 365 days a year to protect your investment and your future.”

