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NJEA concerned with *Race To The Top*

January 6, 2010
Barbara Keshishian, President of the 200,000-member New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), today released the following statement detailing NJEA's concerns with the federal "Race To The Top" (RTTT) grant program:

"NJEA supports the state's efforts to find new funding for public education. But like so many previous federal education mandates, Race To The Top (RTTT) is both economically and educationally unsound.

"New Jersey's perilous economic situation certainly requires us to identify and pursue new sources of funding for our public schools. Unfortunately, RTTT raises a

number of red flags that policymakers should consider before accepting just four years of federal funding with so many strings attached. It could end up costing us more than it provides, both educationally and economically.

"Here's why. From an educational standpoint, it is clear from the state's application that New Jersey would need to significantly increase the number of students tested annually and the number of tests administered to each student. We have already learned from „No Child Left Behind" that a singular focus on standardized tests requires teachers and students to spend far too much time on test preparation, robbing them of opportunities to focus on critical thinking

skills and non-tested subjects. "By requiring all students to be tested every year in even more subjects, teaching to the test will become the sole focus in our classrooms. NJEA believes that is terrible educational policy.

"In addition, the cost of these additional tests could far outstrip the \$100 million in annual RTTT funding we are seeking. And after those four years of RTTT funding are gone, then who will pay for the testing?

"As Commissioner Davy pointed out in the Jan. 5 RTTT meeting, the RTTT funds are limited; once those funds are spent, the state and local districts will be forced to scramble for funds to maintain these efforts. Just the cost

(see RTTT concerns, pg. 2)

Health care alert - UPDATE

On Monday, Jan. 11, national labor leaders, including NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, met with President Barack Obama to discuss health care reform.

On Thursday, Jan. 14, Van Roekel and other national labor leaders met with White House staff to specifically discuss the federal health care excise tax on health plans.

The White House and national labor leaders apparently were able to form a compromise that includes a federal excise tax.

NJEA remains steadfast in its opposition to any excise tax.

We continue to urge you to contact your representatives and tell them that ANY federal excise tax will amount to a tax increase for middle class

workers and their families.

Call your senators and tell them to oppose any measure that contains an excise tax:

**Senator Frank Lautenberg,
(973) 639-8700**

**Senator Robert Menendez,
(973) 645-3030**

Call your congressman and tell him to oppose any measure that contains an excise tax.

RTTT concerns continued



Barbara Keshishian
NJEA President

“The proposals called for in RTTT are not supported by the research, and will therefore not be engines for improving student achievement.”

of administering the number of additional tests required to meet the standards of RTTT would be significant and could be greater than the amount of the grant. The state could be left holding the bag for another unfunded federal mandate. “Our concerns with RTTT do not mean NJEA opposes serious reforms. NJEA has been a leader in many successful educational reform efforts statewide. At the Jan. 5 meeting, Commissioner Davy lauded the Progressive Science Initiative (PSI), which NJEA implemented through its Center for Teaching and Learning. Through the Center for Teaching and Learning, NJEA is also implementing a Progressive Math Initiative

and has developed a leadership program for county teachers of the year to lead school improvement efforts in their regions. “NJEA has strongly advocated for greater access to high-quality preschool. Few educational innovations have demonstrated clearer, more concrete benefits than high quality preschool programs, which are the primary reason that New Jersey leads the nation in closing the achievement gaps between white and minority students. “NJEA also supports other proven reforms such as Professional Learning Communities that encourage collaboration among teachers and school leaders, smaller class sizes, smaller schools, better mentoring programs for

educators, family involvement, universal full-day kindergarten, and many more. “We look forward to working with the state and federal departments of education to implement real reform that is data-driven and proven to succeed. “The proposals called for in RTTT are not supported by the research, and will therefore not be engines for improving student achievement. “Our students deserve nothing less than our best, and RTTT falls far short of that standard.”

Reprinted from NJEA.org

December Rep Meeting—Rocked

The December representative council meeting was rocking with DJ Tony Motley’s sounds.

President Tony Salese held a brief rep



council meeting followed by dinner and dancing. DJ Tony Motley entertained the crowd with a variety of songs.

In addition to the music and dancing, Congressman Donald Payne stopped by to address our members.

Congressman Payne is a strong supporter of public education and teachers. As he has in the past, Congressman Payne attempts to attend most Es-



Congressman Donald Payne with Congressional Contact Committee members Amy Scott (left) and Brenda Hoffer-Battle (right).

sex County functions. Thank you Congressman for all your support.



ECEA Legislative Reception

On January 6, 2010 the ECEA hosted their annual legislative cocktail reception at the Atrium Country Club in West Orange. As in the past, the cocktail reception is an informal meet and greet for legislators and their constituents. ECEA members mingle with legislators to address concerns in a relaxed, friendly format. Many of the legislators are pleased with this type of format as the format allows for a per-



Tony Salese with Assemblyman Fred Scalera

sonal interaction with members and legislators.

The reception was attended by

Congressman Donald Payne, State Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, State Assemblyman Tom Giblin, State Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, State Assemblyman Fredrick Scalera.



Congressman Payne with ECEA Members



Congressman Donald Payne, ECEA President Tony Salese, and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey.



President Tony Salese and Assemblyman Tom Giblin

MLK Human Rights Dinner Great Success



Hill Harper delivering his speech

On January 16, 2010, the NJEA held its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Human Rights Dinner. The dinner, hosted by Jacqui

Greadington, chairperson of the NJEA Human Rights Committee, was a great success with over 500 attending. Keynote speaker, Hill Harper from **CSI: New York** addressed the crowd calling for a new paradigm in educational instruction. Interacting with guests while delivering his speech, Mr. Harper was both humorous and serious regaling the crowd with

questions, stories, and adlibs. Following his address, Mr. Harper held a limited book signing for NJEA members. Mr. Harper, a Brown University and Harvard Law graduate, is the author of *Letters to a Young Brother* and *Letters to a Young Sister*.



“Keynote speaker, Hill Harper from *CSI: New York* addressed the crowd calling for a new paradigm in educational instruction.”

Nominate a Scholar Athlete

NJEA and News 12 New Jersey are seeking high school students who excel both academically and athletically. The NJEA/News 12 Scholar Athlete Recognition Program honors New Jersey high school seniors who are successful not only in the classroom, but on the court or on the field.

Thirty students will be selected based on nominations received from high schools around the state. Each week, the Scholar Athlete will be featured in a news segment on News 12 New Jersey. In June, the winners, their families, coaches, and teachers will be honored at a luncheon. One student will be selected as 2009-10 Scholar

Athlete of the Year and receive a \$1,000 scholarship. To nominate a student, go to njea.org and fill out the nomination form. The form must be signed by the principal or guidance counselor, as well as the coach or athletic director. A News 12 sports panel will make the selection and notify the winners and their schools. **The deadline for submissions is Feb. 19, 2010.**



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Upcoming NJEA/ECEA Events

2/18 Higher Education Workshop

2/26-28 NJEA ESP Conference

3/5 & 3/6 Winter Leadership North Conference

3/18 ECEA Bargaining Workshop - Appian Way

3/25 Minority Leadership Conference - Atrium

3/12 & 3/13 NEA ESP Conference



Win a Disney Character appearance at your school!

Read Across New Jersey will run from Dec. 1, 2009 to March 1, 2010. This school wide project is a great opportunity to get your students excited about reading.

To enter fill out the entry form. The form is located on the NJEA website njea.org. Print out and photocopy an entry form for each student in your school. Each student lists all the books they read during their free time from Dec. 1, 2009 through March 1, 2009. Books that are read specifically for a classroom assignment should not be included. The classroom teacher or school librarian should initial the form to verify the student has read the books. As students fill up their forms, give them a new blank one. Collect

completed forms and hold them until the end of the contest.



Mail completed entry forms along with a letter from the school principal or staff member in charge of coordinating the contest. The letter should include the number of students enrolled in the school and total number of books read.

Send completed materials, post-marked by March 12, 2010 to:

Dawn Hiltner
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Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

