An Open Letter to Arkansas Education Professionals:
Teacher Freedom Now Rings Across Our Nation

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Dear Teachers and School Staff:

The recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) in favor of Mark Janus impacts education professionals across the nation. As executive director of the nonunion Arkansas State Teachers Association (ASTA), I am reaching out to you to start a discussion about what this means for public-school educators. Before the ruling, millions of public school employees were required — yes, required — to pay dues to a teacher union as a condition for employment.

What does this ruling mean for Arkansas teachers?

• It affirms the fact that Arkansas teachers are not required to be members of the teachers union, known locally as the Arkansas Education Association/National Education Association. (You may be surprised to know there are Arkansas teachers who have been misinformed and believe they have to join the union.)
• Also affirmed through this ruling is the fact that when you are a union member, your dues fund political agendas, the foundation of the Court’s ruling.
• This is the perfect time for educators to explore nonunion options in order to make informed decisions about their choices in professional associations.
• By law Arkansas educators can drop their union membership at any time. Narrow drop “windows” do not exist in our state. ASTA members have always been able to drop their membership at any time.

The nonunion association I lead is the fastest-growing educator association in Arkansas and an affiliate of the largest in the nation — the Association of American Educators (AAE). While union dues can range from $60 to $100 per month, for only $16.50 per month, ASTA members receive a strong liability policy, legal benefits, professional support, member-driven advocacy, national and local representation, and many other benefits.

Most important, ASTA members are provided the peace of mind of knowing they are protecting their livelihood and not a political or social agenda.

One belief we hold strongly is the right for all teachers to be able to make informed and voluntary decisions to choose a professional association that serves and supports them while respecting their goals, values, and budgets. The recent Supreme Court ruling opens a door for millions of educators across the nation to be informed of their choices and educate themselves and others as they seek to ensure that they receive the support and benefits necessary to be able to concentrate on their students. For more information, visit astapro.org.

Thank you for all you do for Arkansas students! If you have any questions, I invite you to personally email me at michele@astapro.org.

Sincerely,

Michele Ballentine-Linch, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Arkansas State Teachers Association