



#RedforEd: Socialists Organizing Teachers to Turn Purple States Blue by 2020

Michael Patrick Leahy

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A well-funded and subversive leftist movement of teachers in the United States threatens to tilt the political balance nationwide in the direction of Democrats across the country as Republicans barely hang on in key states that they need to hold for President Donald Trump to win re-election and for Republicans to have a shot at retaking the House and holding onto their Senate majority.

This teachers union effort, called #RedforEd, has its roots in the very same socialism that President Trump vowed in his 2019 State of the Union address to stop, and it began in its current form in early 2018 in a far-flung corner of the country before spreading nationally. Its stated goals—higher teacher pay and better education conditions—are overshadowed by a more malevolent political agenda: a leftist Democrat uprising designed to flip purple or red states to blue, using the might of a significant part of the education system as its lever.

The movement takes its name from a political organizing tool first seen in Florida in 2010, when teachers union members wore red to express political opposition to public school reform proposals under consideration at that time in the state and encouraged parents and political activists from other unions to join them.

Here, for the first time, Breitbart News pulls the mask back from what #RedforEd really is, who is behind the movement, and what its true objectives are, in a full examination of exactly who these people influencing the teachers of America's kids are and what their goals—particularly their political objectives—really are.

Teachers unions in the United States have become increasingly aggressive since early 2018, launching strikes in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Los Angeles, California, and Denver, Colorado, spurred on by a social media campaign known as #RedforEd, which was launched in March 2018 by Noah Karvelis, a 24-year-old left-wing political activist in just his second year as a public school teacher in Arizona.

Ostensibly focused on better pay for teachers, the real objective of the #RedforEd movement, as expressed by its young founder at the [Socialism 2018](#) conference held in Chicago this July, is to obtain political power to advance a socialist agenda.

“We’ve created an organization now. We have a network of 2,000 leaders who are experienced. They’ve been out on a job action. They’ve organized their campuses. They’ve collected signatures for a ballot initiative,” Karvelis said in his 13 minute speech to an estimated 1,800

fellow socialists from around the country, a number of whom were also teachers. (Beginning at the 11:00 minute mark of the video of his speech found at this [KFYI webpage](#).)

“We’ve built a new political power in Arizona and it’s taking control right now of the future of the state,” Karvelis added.

“We have to build our own political power. We have to build our own organization. We have to stay true to our values. They have to be Democratic,” the young socialist teacher concluded.

This hyper-partisan political activism among teachers unions across the country championed by Karvelis in his Socialism 2018 speech has a specific political purpose in the 2020 presidential and congressional elections: to help drive battleground states from purple to blue, solidify blue states, and put red states in play.

In other words, in addition to getting pay raises for teachers, a key objective of the #RedforEd movement — despite its organizers’ public claims of “non-partisan”ship — is to defeat Donald Trump in 2020 and elect a Democrat president.

A look at the electoral college map suggests that a highly focused effort of mobilized #RedforEd activists could have a significant impact in 2020.

This heightened political activism of teachers unions in the #RedforEd campaign has the potential to swing the outcome of the 2020 presidential election in several key battleground states — such as Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Colorado, where margins of victory were very narrow.

President Trump won Michigan by less than 11,000 votes, Pennsylvania by less than 45,000 votes, and Wisconsin by less than 23,000 votes.

A hyperactive #RedforEd movement has the potential to swing that many votes, or more, away from President Trump in all three states.

Similarly, President Trump lost Minnesota by a little more than 44,000 votes. An aggressive #RedforEd campaign there has the potential of keeping Trump from turning Minnesota red in 2020.

Though Hillary Clinton’s margin of victory in Colorado was slightly higher—a little more than 135,000 votes, or 5 percent of the votes cast in the state—the Trump campaign has that state in its sights for 2020. #RedforEd political activism in that state could also potentially keep it in the Democrat column on election day.

A movement that can turn out 50,000 to 75,000 protesters at the Arizona Capitol has the potential to bring President Trump’s 3.5 point margin of victory in the state (less than 91,000 votes) to something much closer in 2020, especially in light of Democrat Sen. Kyrsten Sinema’s (D-AZ) November 2018 statewide victory over Republican Martha McSally (now serving in the U.S. Senate by appointment after her electoral loss).

Without the 57 electoral college votes from Michigan (16), Pennsylvania (20), Wisconsin (10), and Arizona (11), President Trump’s electoral college total on election night would have dropped from 306 — 36 more than the 270 needed to win the presidency — to 249, or 21 short of the 270 needed to win the presidency.

The stated initial purpose of the #RedforEd campaign was to obtain national support for Arizona public school teachers who went on strike in April for a 20 percent pay raise. The strike was settled in May when most of their demands were met.

A key tactic in the Arizona #RedforEd campaign was the mobilization of red-clad teachers and supporters in a Phoenix march last April, described as the largest teachers march in the state's history.

The national #RedforEd campaign was only beginning, however. Subsequently, teachers in Los Angeles, California, and Denver, Colorado, went on strike, all embracing the #RedforEd platform, which seeks more pay for teachers, no accountability for public education results, and the end to public financial support for alternatives to our failing public education system.

The Los Angeles teachers strike ended in January. The Denver teachers strike ended last week.

In an article titled “Teachers are leading a national workers revolt. Oakland may be next,” Vox reported on Monday that, “Public school teachers in Oakland, California, said they will strike on Thursday, following 18 months of tense negotiations with district officials over pay raises and classroom sizes.”

On Tuesday, teachers in West Virginia went on strike for the second time in two years, this time for clearly political purposes, as NPR reported:

West Virginia public school teachers are striking over a new bill that paves the way for charter schools and private school vouchers in a state that relies primarily on public education.

In anticipation of the strike, almost all of the state's 55 public school systems have canceled classes for Tuesday.

As the Cato Institute reported, spending on public schools more than doubled between 1970 and 2010 (in constant 2013 dollars) and public school employment nearly doubled, while public elementary and secondary school student performance — as measured by standardized tests of math, science, and reading — has remained stagnant. The most recent Nation's Report Card indicates that the trend of stagnant student performance in math and reading continued between 2009 and 2017, while civic literacy, deemed below proficient, did not improve between 2010 and 2014.

The #RedforEd campaign is just the latest version of teachers union activism, a twist on the “Wear Red for Public Ed” campaign that was started in a Facebook page (that still exists) by Florida schoolteacher Donna Yates Mace in late 2010 to signify opposition to newly elected Gov. Rick Scott's proposed education reforms. Scott, a Republican, was subsequently elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2018.

Mace — aided by the Florida Education Association and a Facebook site (no longer operational) started by Chris Janotta, a public school teacher in Illinois, called “The Million Teacher March” — launched a “National Wear Red for Public Ed Day” on January 4, 2011, to protest the inauguration of Gov. Scott in Florida, as the *South Florida SunSentinel* reported:

In a quiet show of opposition to changes proposed by Gov. Rick Scott's education transition team, some parents and teachers across Florida wore red and lit up Facebook with messages of support for public schools. As part of a grassroots campaign, they posted pictures of themselves

and their children in red, with some changing their profile photos to incorporate red and others putting up images of a single red T-shirt.

Scott's team late last month recommended the state revisit merit pay for teachers, expand school voucher programs and alter how public schools are funded. Most of the ideas mirrored the new governor's campaign promise to get rid of an "outdated" educational system and give parents more choices for their children.

To signal their disapproval, several popular Facebook groups, including Stop Senate Bill 6 and Testing Is Not Teaching, embraced the move to "Wear Red to Support Public Ed." The idea came from a Jacksonville teacher, Donna Yates Mace, and quickly spread over the Internet.

The "Wear Red for Public Ed" campaign soon spread to Wisconsin, where the Wisconsin Education Association aggressively opposed Gov. Scott Walker's labor union reform proposals. That opposition culminated in a rowdy takeover of the state capitol building in Madison by red-clad teachers and supporters, as captured in this memorable YouTube video:

The 2011 protests in Wisconsin were ultimately unsuccessful. Walker, a Republican, put his labor union reforms — which affected all public labor unions in the state, from teachers to firefighters to police — into law, and he survived a subsequent recall election. He was re-elected to a second term in 2014 but narrowly lost his bid for a third term in 2018.

Between 2012 and 2017, the "Wear Red for Public Ed" campaign continued, with varying degrees of success, among teachers unions across the country.

The political environment changed after the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016, and teachers union activism became dominated by young, hardcore left-wing political activists, all operating under the general wing of the various teachers unions and, in particular, the National Education Association.

Noah Karvelis — who graduated from the University of Illinois with a teaching degree in 2016, just a few months before Donald Trump was elected — was one of those activists. [FEC records](#) indicate he made small donations in 2015 and 2016 to the Bernie Sanders for President campaign, on which he also volunteered.

A music teacher who [focuses on hip-hop music in the classroom](#), Karvelis landed a job [teaching public school at Tres Rios Service Academy](#), part of the [Littleton Elementary School District](#), which serves Avondale and Tolleson, suburbs to the west of Phoenix, Arizona. Once in Arizona, he immediately became involved as a campaign worker in two left-wing campaigns.

During his first year teaching, he also had time to pen an article for Progressive Times, which was published in February 2017, [titled](#) "From Marx to Trump: Labor's Role in Revolution."

"Without the empowerment of the working class and of organized labor, any revolution is destined from the outset for failure. In these early days of the Trump Era, we must continue our fight and bolster the working class as we strive towards a progressive political revolution. By doing so, we will move our revolution ever closer to imminent success," Karvelis [wrote](#) in that article.

Miraculously, at the beginning of only his second year as a teacher, he was elected [president of the Littleton Education Association](#), which has about 150 members who teach in the Littleton

Elementary School District — almost all of whom had more teaching experience than he did at the time. The Littleton Education Association is one of 200 local affiliates of the Arizona Education Association.

Karvelis explained in this October interview with the left-wing Shakti Journal the key role that Arizona Education Association President Joe Thomas played in the launch of the #RedforEd movement:

RedForEd is a movement to increase funding for education in Arizona. The primary goal is to restore the 1.1 billion in education funding cuts. It all started with a tweet between myself and Joe Thomas discussing what the climate among educators in Arizona was like. Ultimately, we decided to have me start a RedForEd day.

In that interview, Karvelis acknowledged that a newly organized political group, Arizona Educators United, “oversees and organizes the [#RedforEd] movement.”

Karvelis, Rebecca Garelli, and Dylan Wegela are the three leaders of Arizona Educators United, according to an interview with Jacobin Magazine, another left-wing publication.

In April, the Socialist Worker website reported:

A number of activists from Arizona Educators United, which has been leading the organizing, attended the Labor Notes conference in Chicago earlier this month. Vanessa Arredondo-Aguierre, a second-grade teacher in Somerton in the southwest corner of the state; Rebecca Garelli, a seventh-grade math and science teacher in Phoenix and former member of the Chicago Teachers Union; and Dylan Wegela, a seventh-grade science teacher in Phoenix; talked with Lee Sustar about what’s at stake as the teachers continue their actions.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Garelli is a 2004 graduate of DePaul University and taught in the Chicago Public School systems until September 2015. It is unclear if she began teaching in Arizona in 2015, 2016, or 2017.

Though the group’s website claims it is “non-partisan,” it provides no information about its funding sources.

2018 saw a major increase in #RedforEd political activism among teachers in red, blue, and battleground states, as *Time* reported last week:

The high-profile efforts by teachers in West Virginia, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Colorado, Arizona, North Carolina and Washington to advocate for better pay and benefits drew sympathy around the country. TIME featured the teachers’ fight on a cover last September. A number of teachers ran for office during the 2018 midterms and public education even played a key role in some elections.

Already in 2019, thousands of teachers in Los Angeles, the second-largest school district in the country, went on strike for a week in January.

Workers’ enthusiasm for engaging in collective action seem to have left union leaders optimistic about the future.

“Momentum is on our side. Public support for unions is at its highest level in 15 years, and elected officials nationwide are embracing unionism as the key to unrigging an economy that

overwhelmingly favors the privileged and powerful over working families,” American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees President Lee Saunders said in a statement in January when union membership numbers were released. “Our challenge now is to make it easier for working people to join unions — the one way for workers to get the dignity and respect they deserve.”

Shortly after the Arizona strike was settled, a Supreme Court decision shook the foundation of the teachers’ unions to its core. As Breitbart reported on June 27, “The U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* on Wednesday, ruling 5-4 that public sector unions could no longer compel non-members to pay dues because it violated their First Amendment rights.”

The decision is a major victory for free speech and for workers’ rights — and a major setback for public sector unions, who have emerged in recent decades as a powerful left-wing political force.

Mark Janus, the Illinois state employee who challenged compulsory dues, had been required to pay about \$535 per year, even though he opposed his union’s positions on many issues in its collective bargaining.

Breitbart reported the following day, June 28, “The president of the nation’s largest union said the Supreme Court’s ruling that public sector unions can no longer force non-members to pay dues shows ‘we are living in a system that is rigged to benefit special interests and billionaires.’”

Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association (NEA) said Wednesday’s “radical decision” is “a blatant slap in the face for educators, nurses, firefighters, police officers and all public servants who make our communities strong and safe.”

“Even though the Supreme Court sided with corporate CEOs and billionaires over working Americans, unions will continue to be the best vehicle on the path to the middle class,” she added.

Rebecca Friedrichs, the plaintiff in the Supreme Court case *Friedrichs vs. California Teachers*, told Breitbart News in January that union attorneys in the Janus case foreshadowed aggressive political activism on behalf of teachers unions in the event the court ruled against them in the case:

First, I know #RedforEd is a direct correlation to the Janus decision because during Janus’s oral arguments, the attorney for the unions made the following threat. He told the justices that if employees were freed from forced unions fees, that unions would, quote ‘raise an untold specter of union unrest throughout the country,’ end quote, because quote, ‘union security is the trade-off for no strikes.’

So the unions are pitching a major temper tantrum here. They’re going to wreak havoc across the country until they get what they want. That’s what bullies do. And it’s time we all stopped them. That’s why I’m passionately speaking out and asking teachers [to] please inform yourself about where your money’s really going. You’re being used to fund a very angry agenda. [emphasis added]

As Breitbart’s Dr. Susan Berry wrote in July:

The headline of an Education Week op-ed by Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), states the Supreme Court's ruling that public sector unions can no longer compel nonmembers to pay fees "only makes us angrier."

Referring to the high court's decision in *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Council* as one in which the plaintiffs "weaponized the First Amendment from its original purpose of securing the political freedom necessary for democracy by arguing compulsory union fees violated free speech," Weingarten wrote, however, that reports of the death of unions "have been greatly exaggerated."

The teachers' union leader boasts her union has actually grown by a quarter million members within the last decade, garnering AFT 1.75 million members – "our largest membership ever."

There are more than 3.2 million public school teachers in the United States, of which 70 percent are union members — a drop from 74 percent just a decade ago.

The *Janus* decision makes it easier for teachers to leave unions, and indications are the percentage of teachers who are union members has dropped precipitously in the last six months, as teachers succeed in fighting union efforts to dull the decision's effect.

In January, for instance, Breitbart's Berry wrote, "A group of Ohio public sector employees has won in a settlement with union officials who attempted to block workers from exercising their First Amendment right to refrain from paying dues that support the union."

These blows to union membership have served to intensify the political zeal behind #RedforEd campaign efforts across the country, activities and policies that now seem to mirror the far-left attitudes of the radical left-wing Democrat members of Congress, such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), in addition to the associated activist group known as Justice Democrats.

The confluence between the recently introduced far-left "Green New Deal" and the #RedforEd movement can be seen in common themes and language.

Democrats and teachers union activists in the #RedforEd movement foreshadowed this shift last May when Democrat leaders in Congress and on the House Labor and Education Committee proposed a "Better Deal for Teachers and Students" that promised increased teacher pay from the federal government and more money for schools.

Specifically, with their "Better Deal for Teachers and Students," Democrats promised they would:

1. Dedicate \$50 billion to states and school districts to increase teacher compensation and recruit and retain a strong, diverse workforce over the next 10 years.
2. Establish a new \$50 billion fund for school infrastructure and resources.
3. Provide additional support to initiatives that increase capacity in Title I schools and ensure all students have access to academic opportunities like computer science, music, and civics.

4. Protect teachers' freedom to negotiate for better pay and conditions by safeguarding the right of public employees to join unions, collectively bargain, and engage in collective action to support each other.
5. Meet our federal commitment to fund special education.

Such a proposal, if enacted, would significantly increase the percentage of public education funding for primary and secondary schools that comes from the federal government, which is currently about eight percent. The remainder of the current funding is split between federal and state governments.

#RedforEd style political activism on the part of teachers unions across the country can be expected to intensify throughout the remainder of 2019, and will likely become even more intense as we enter the presidential election year of 2020.