



June 9, 2009

Ms. Joyce Powell
Chairperson, NJEA PAC
NJEA PAC
180 West State Street
PO Box 1211
Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

Dear Ms. Powell:

Thank you for your recent letter and invitation.

Like you, I am fully committed to supporting New Jersey's kids, teachers and parents in the effort to make sure our children get the first-class education they deserve. Our state's teachers are charged with one of the greatest responsibilities one can have, and they deliver each and every day for our kids.

I am the proud product of our state's public education system. In fact, my late mother worked as an employee for many years in our local public school district. I know first-hand the value and importance of our public schools. Our public schools are excellent, among the best in America. Our teachers and educational professionals deserve much of the credit for this.

I would enjoy the opportunity to meet with your membership to engage in a frank dialogue about the future of our public education system. Because I respect your members' contributions to our public education system, I want to speak honestly and openly with you to ensure you know exactly where I stand and for what I believe. I feel that doing so under the specter of an endorsement is difficult, however; that is why I will not be seeking the endorsement of your organization.

While our kids' education is first-class in nearly all parts of the state, another equally important truth is that in too many districts, entire generations of children aren't learning the basic skills in math, reading, writing and science. Especially where schools are failing – particularly in our urban school districts – we have an obligation to reject the status quo in favor of new, innovative approaches. I support school choice and vouchers in these districts to give kids and parents locked into failing schools the ability to choose the right school for their individual needs. I support merit pay for our best teachers. And I believe firmly that the quality of one's education should be based on more than the dollars spent on it. Above all, I am committed to improving our worst schools while protecting our best.

It's true that times are tough. But the truth is that Jon Corzine has handed the NJEA and every school district a ticking time bomb in this year's budget. He has funded the new school aid formula with \$1 billion in revenue that will disappear next year. Every school budget and academic, athletic, and extra-curricular program for our kids is at risk because of the Governor's reckless, short-sighted policy. Governor Corzine has refused to make the tough decisions required to make sure we make education funding a priority for recurring revenue and to avoid the ticking time bomb. Governor Corzine is pushing off the day of reckoning to a future year in order to protect his re-election campaign this year.

We have among the highest-paid teachers in the country, and it is important to note that it was a Republican Governor (and Chairman of my campaign), Tom Kean, who instituted the minimum teacher

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salary in New Jersey. Excellent public schools require fairly-compensated teachers and staff. I support this.

But the other equally important truth is that taxpayers cannot continue to pay the rising costs of salary increases and benefits. The truth is, because of Corzine's reckless fiscal policies and the \$1 billion hole in school funding next year, the next Governor will need to make some tough decisions about public employee compensation and its soaring cost. Jon Corzine will not tell you the truth about this, but I will. I respect you enough to tell you this up-front and to tell you that your members will be listened to as we make these difficult decisions.

I am not seeking the formal endorsement of your organization because it will require promises that the Governor and I both know will not be kept by either candidate who makes them.

But let me be clear: I will actively be seeking your vote in November. I seek your vote because I know we share the goal of an excellent public education system that taxpayers can afford.

We may disagree on some issues, but I know we agree on what's most important – delivering the best education we can for our kids. I look forward to meeting with you at a mutually convenient time to discuss how we can work together to achieve this all-important goal.

Sincerely,
Chris Christie

