**Teachers unions finally have some competition in school board races**

It’s no secret that the teachers unions have control over most aspects of public education in the U.S. The school boards, which negotiate with unions over salary, work rules, etc. are particularly important for the unions to dominate.

Michael Hartney, a fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, recently [quantified the unions’ stronghold](https://californiapolicycenter.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=11ce7cad5fe43ca4d5e1c25a7&id=68c15007a6&e=53eab3804e) on the all-important boards. Hartney asserts that union-endorsed candidates win about 70% of all competitive school board races. Union support helps both incumbents and challengers, and union-friendly candidates also tend to win in both conservative and liberal school districts.

The largest union in the country, the National Education Association, has 13,000 local affiliates in all 50 states. California leads in union involvement in school board races. In the recent election, the California Teachers Association [funded 287 board candidates in 125 school districts](https://californiapolicycenter.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=11ce7cad5fe43ca4d5e1c25a7&id=7a61249fb0&e=53eab3804e) – large and small – spending more than $2.8 million in union dues for its candidates.

The process is simple. The teachers unions fund left-wing school board candidates, who, when they win, then support generous pay and benefits for teachers as well as various extreme causes not related to kids getting a great education. Then, via union dues, a portion of teacher pay is routed back to the union to start the cycle again. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

Union leaders clearly know the game. As former Los Angeles teacher union boss Alex Caputo-Pearl once explained, “We have a unique power – [we elect our bosses](https://californiapolicycenter.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=11ce7cad5fe43ca4d5e1c25a7&id=6421e0020e&e=53eab3804e). It would be difficult to think of workers anywhere else who elect their bosses. We do. We must take advantage of it.”

And take advantage they do, but less so than in the recent election. Ballotpedia, the nonpartisan election website, analyzed 361 school board races and found that 36% of candidates who opposed Covid shutdowns, diversity initiatives or the use of gender-neutral learning materials, won their elections. At the same time, the analysis showed just 28% of winning candidates supported those policies, while about a third of candidates in this election didn’t take clear positions on these issues. That 28 percent is down from elections in April and November 2021, according to Ballotpedia.

One reason the union losses piled up is because many parent supported candidates received financial support from political-action committees dedicated to local school communities or from advocacy groups, such as the 1776 Project PAC and Moms for Liberty, which claims it endorsed 270 school board candidates, with about half emerging winners.

Ground zero for school board upheaval is Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis endorsed 30 school board candidates in the August statewide election. Results show that 19 of his endorsed candidates won outright, and six others who were involved in runoffs won their races on Nov. 8. So, out of the 30 candidates the governor supported this year, 25 won. ... In more good news from Florida, the NEA state affiliate, the Florida Education Association, lost more than 4500 members— a 3.3 percent drop — in the 2020-21 school year.

Perhaps the drop in membership was because the teacher union leaders overplayed their political hand the last few years. ... Along with the involvement of parent groups like Moms for Liberty, this would portend well for children in the nation’s public schools.

*Read the full article* [*"School Board Battles are Raging,"*](https://californiapolicycenter.us10.list-manage.com/track/click?u=11ce7cad5fe43ca4d5e1c25a7&id=36891d2718&e=53eab3804e) *by Larry Sand, president of the California Teachers Empowerment Network.*