

Transforming Schools with Repurposed Union Dues

BY SHAWN WASHBURN

The Janus case provides creative opportunities for educators to make a difference in the lives of their students.

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You've seen it hundreds of times on the popular home improvement shows. One creative person discovers an old barn or abandoned factory. This designer possesses a vision, a belief that there is still life within that lumber, more purpose inside those planks. Freed up for a greater story, those materials are reclaimed and used as a headboard of a bed or an accent wall in a house. It's a beautiful process, and thankfully one not limited to wood and metal.

Because of recent events, Christian educators across the country now have a similar opportunity to reclaim and repurpose, to give new meaning and tell a new story.

On June 27, 2018, in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled to side with public sector employees in the case of *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees*. Among other details, for the 22 states involved, this ruling declared that non-union employees would no longer be forced to pay fees to their local union. For years, teachers who didn't agree with their union's political ideologies and activities were still forced to pay up to 80-90% of union dues even if they decided to opt-out of their union membership. Those desiring to maintain legal representation through an



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organization that shared their values, such as Christian Educators Association International (CEAI), faced paying for both, knowing that their forced union dues were still going to support activities or political ideologies that may not align with their values.

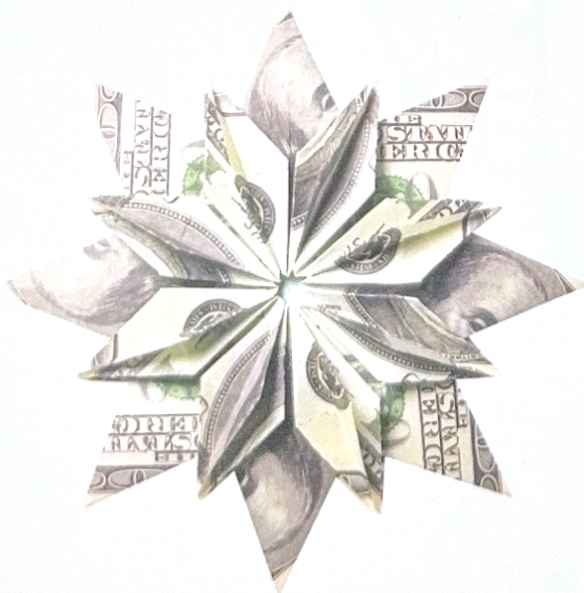
Well, the court's decision in the Janus case has changed all of that—educators now have a choice. Educators who choose not to join the union will no longer be required to pay union dues. Additionally, new teachers will no longer be automatically opted-in to their local unions. They will, instead, be non-members by default, free to either opt-in with their local unions or to join a group like CEAI. For those unfamiliar with CEAI, we offer educators liability insurance (along with a number of additional benefits) for a fraction of the cost of local unions.

While some Christian educators may still choose to remain members of their local unions out of a desire to positively influence from within, others may choose membership with CEAI or a similar organization. Now these educators are afforded new options for

ways they can impact their schools for Christ with their newly-refunded union dues. While nearly endless opportunities exist, for inspiration, we can look to a few creative CEAI members who have already repurposed their former union dues.

Not too long ago, Roger A., a teacher and CEAI member in Michigan, found himself in such a position. Roger had always felt uneasy about the manner in which the union spent his money because it didn't align with his values. When Michigan became a Right to Work state, he jumped at the chance to leave the union. Roger decided that he didn't want to simply keep his newly-refunded dues money. He wanted to use it to make a positive impact in his school. So, he got creative and started a scholarship fund for seniors at his school. Each year, Roger offers a \$500 scholarship to a student from his school who meets certain academic standards and also models Christian values. At the end of the year, he presents the scholarship at a school awards night, using the opportunity to share about CEAI, his values, as well as God's desire to make a difference in each person's life.


In a similar way, CEAI member Karen S. creatively uses money formerly sent to her public teachers union to help fund the Honor the Grads program in Seminole County, Florida. In this program, peers throughout the county nominate seniors who display godly character



traits during their high school careers. The winners of the awards are honored for their positive influence on their campuses at an end-of-the year ceremony where they receive a medallion, a certificate, and a \$100 scholarship.

Meanwhile, in Kentucky, Roger D. uses newly freed-up funds to grant Students of Character awards to students who exemplify traits such as honesty, integrity, determination, and more. The awards are handed out at the end-of-school awards ceremony, drawing attention to the positive impact students create in their schools when exhibiting godly character traits. Roger has been told by several parents that they feel his Students of Character awards are the most important awards presented at the assembly.

Educators, God may be calling you to remain in your teachers union. But if not, you now have the freedom to creatively use your newly-refunded union dues to make a difference through a scholarship or similar means. And CEAI is here to help. Educators can now donate funds to CEAI, receiving a tax deduction. You then can have access to 100%

of those funds for a purpose consistent with the mission of CEAI—to transform schools with God's love and truth. 

If you would like more information on how to repurpose your union dues by setting up a scholarship through CEAI, contact us at info@ceai.org.

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