Vermont Team Thrives at NEA RA

Nearly 20 delegates from all over the state were among the nearly 7,000 NEA members attending this year’s NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, DC.

The annual event—the largest gathering of teachers in the country—features long days of speeches, debates and networking. It is where the national agenda of our union is set, and it gives the leadership of the NEA direction for the upcoming school year.

This year’s gathering (see accompanying story) focused on justice, on ending the so-called school-to-prison pipeline, a recommitment to eradicating structural racism and, as expected, hearing from Hillary Clinton, who gave a rousing speech (and who garnered the support of 86 percent of delegates).

For Vermont, of course, the non-political parts of the RA were more significant (at the end of the RA, and before Bernie Sanders threw his support to Hillary, Vermont-NEA remained the only affiliate to not recommend Secretary Clinton). Indeed, Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen continued to support her efforts to use our public schools as the key tool to ending the insidiousness of structural and institutional racism.

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Bernie, Your Union Throw Support to Clinton

PORTSMOUTH, NH – Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen last month joined Bernie Sanders in recommending the election of Hillary Clinton for president, saying the stakes are too high to remain divided.

“I and my union have been unwavering supporters of Bernie for decades because of his unwavering support of students, educators and all working people,” Allen said while attending the first joint campaign appearance with Clinton and Sanders here.

“And now that Bernie is throwing his support behind Secretary Clinton, we believe that uniting behind one candidate is our best chance at preventing Donald Trump from becoming president.”

Bernie said that candidate is Hillary Clinton.

“Secretary Clinton has won the Democratic nominating process, and I congratulate her for that. She will be the Democratic nominee for president. And I intend to do everything I can to make certain she will be the next president of the United States,” Bernie said. “Together we will continue to fight for a government that represents all of us and not just the 1 percent, a government based on the principles of economic, social, racial and environmental justice.”

Vermont-NEA was the first union in the country to recommend Bernie’s candidacy more than a year ago. At the time, Allen, a K-12 librarian from Canaan, Vt., said, “We want to let the whole country in on what we in Vermont have long known. Bernie’s core values are in line with ours: he is pro-family, pro-worker, pro-education and pro-labor and we believe the time has come for his vision to become a national reality.”

The whole country did get to know Bernie in the year since. Running an incredible grassroots campaign, Bernie helped shape the tenor and content of the Democratic contest for president. His campaign brought issues of racial and economic justice, corporate greed, and the needs of working people to the forefront. And now the best opportunity to move Bernie’s vision forward is to ensure that Clinton is elected president in November, Allen said.

“So when Bernie says that Hillary will stand up for us all—that she will give educators a voice in the future of this country—we know he means it,” Allen said. “Already, Hillary has partnered with Bernie to propose plans to make college more accessible and give more Americans a shot at affordable health care.

These ideas are now part of the Democratic Party platform, and they’re a great example of how Hillary and Bernie know we’re stronger when we work together.”

Allen acknowledged that some of Bernie’s supporters aren’t yet ready to vote for Clinton.

“I know that there are many Bernie supporters who don’t want to support Hillary. I have heard from ‘Bernie or Bust’ folks and those who will write Bernie in on the ballot,” she said. “I understand this temptation, but I am strongly against this strategy. We absolutely cannot lose this election. Do we want to let a narrow minded, self-centered racist and sexist hold the most powerful position in the world? Really? Do we want to let the next few Supreme Court Justices be chosen by such a man? Absolutely not. It is up to us to make sure this doesn’t happen.”

Vermont-NEA was the last state affiliate of the National Education Association to recommend Clinton. Allen said with today’s endorsement, Bernie made it clear that his desire is to support Clinton, even in a state where Bernie won 86 percent of the primary vote. Today, Allen wrote an email to fellow NEA members nationwide urging the nation’s educators to thank Bernie and join him in supporting Clinton.

“We simply must vote for the Democratic candidate for president and the many down ticket candidates who are fighting for the middle class and our public schools,” Allen said. “This will only happen if we go to the polls this fall and vote for candidates who support our values and beliefs. We may have lost a battle, but we can win the war!”
I have recently returned from our nation’s capital where the 2016 NEA Representative Assembly was held. I am so very proud of our small, but feisty delegation of 17 Vermont educators. We spent four very full days deliberating on the matters of the NEA.

7000 delegates voted on 125 new business items, along with bylaws, legislative amendments, the strategic plan and budget, and more. We heard speeches from several visitors, one of whom was Hillary Clinton. If you don’t know by now, the NEA has endorsed Hillary Clinton for president. This was an inevitable decision and our delegation, although in opposition to this endorsement, behaved in an extremely mature fashion. I cannot adequately express how impressed I was at the amount of professionalism our delegation demonstrated throughout the RA.

This was a tough RA for me. I really love it when I can fully support a NEA position. I am a proud member of the largest union in the country and it is exhilarating when 3 million members take a stand on issues important to our students, our public schools, and working people. But this year, NEA did not endorse my candidate for president. The Hillary placards, pins, buttons and thunder sticks were all over the place. My delegation and I watched as the HRC fever caught on. We lost a battle, but believe me, there is still a very important war to win.

I know that there are many Bernie candidates who don’t want to support Hillary. I have heard from “Bernie or Bust” folks and those who will write Bernie in on the ballot. I understand the temptation, but I am strongly against this strategy. We absolutely cannot lose this election. The stakes are far too high at this point. Donald Trump is one of the most dangerous candidates for president that this country has ever seen. His heinous statements and actions represent what would become a huge step back for our country. I can’t even begin to think of our country under a Trump administration.

Do we want to let a narrow minded, self-centered racist and sexist hold the most powerful position in the world? Really? Do we want to let the next few Supreme Court justices be chosen by such a man? Absolutely not. It is up to us to make sure this doesn’t happen. We simply must vote for the Democratic candidate for president and the many down ticket candidates who are fighting for the middle class and our public schools.

To move our country forward we must fight for our issues and elect labor and public education friendly candidates. But, this will only happen if we go to the polls this fall and vote for candidates who support our values and beliefs. We may have lost a battle, but we can win the war!

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My heart has broken for the families of the victims of gun violence. While attending the NEA Representative Assembly the first week of July, seven lives were lost due to gun violence between police and community members in three of our cities; Baton Rouge, St. Paul, and Dallas.

Our country has reached a boiling point. Unfortunately, this is just another example of the cultural strife between our communities of color and law enforcement that has existed for years.

The anger and frustration of our black and brown communities is understandable. Now that cell phones and cameras are capturing these encounters, the entire country is finally exposed to what has been going on for decades. A recent discussion on the radio spoke to not only the poverty and income gaps, but a value gap. A scholar from Princeton recently explained how society has long viewed a white life to be more valuable than a black life. It is too easy for whites living in predominantly white neighborhoods to ignore and even deny this claim, but, if the tenets of institutional racism in our country are examined, the claim is blatantly evident.

Our work is cut out for us and we must listen and learn from those who face race-related challenges each and every day. We must become culturally competent and do what we can to improve relationships within our schools and communities. It is time for awareness, education, and action.
8 Ways to Prevent Summer Brain Drain

It’s a fact: Kids forget a lot over the summer. Try these clever methods your colleagues use to keep kids sharp on summer vacation.

Teachers often feel like they send their students off on the last day of school equipped with all of the skills they’ll need to succeed the following school year, only to see those same kids forget half of what they learned by the time they return in September.

They’re not imagining it.

Research shows that most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer, while low-income students lose about the same amount in reading (middle-class students make slight literacy gains in July and August).

The situation isn’t hopeless, however. Some experts say that reading just four books over the summer can help prevent a reading slide for kids. And, one imagines, if it’s that simple to hold onto literacy skills, a little math here and there would have a similar effect.

Teachers can’t follow their students around all summer with books and math manipulatives, but they can give students and their families access to resources, opportunities and information. Here’s how to encourage kids to keep learning once school is out (while still enjoying their summer vacations):

1. **Book Baskets.** Tracie Pueschel, an elementary teacher in Sturgis, Michigan, asks local businesses and residents to donate money and books for “book baskets.” At the end of the school year, each child takes home a basket with 12 to 15 books, along with some poems and word searches. “It’s been huge in getting books in our kids’ homes,” says Pueschel. “I run into them in the store, and they say, ‘I’ve been reading the books in the basket!’”

2. **Lit Night.** Pueschel invites students and parents to attend her school’s “Summer Literacy Night,” which features stations that provide information on summer enrichment programs, as well as informal learning tools such as sidewalk chalk.

3. **Open Library Hours.** To make sure that kids have a quiet place to read, Pueschel’s school keeps its library open to students during the summertime. The school also serves breakfast and lunch, giving parents a “free babysitting” opportunity each morning. The school librarian makes sure that kids rotate between activities—including reading, playing on the computer and building puzzles—and teachers come in to lead special activities. “We have teachers that will sign in and do string art or iron-on crafts, so that we can pull more kids in,” Pueschel says.

4. **The Great Outdoors.** The summer months naturally lend themselves to informal science projects like damming up creeks, exploring the woods and digging in the dirt. Teachers can give students an extra push outside by giving them the tools to start a garden, says Susan Roser, an education consultant and former elementary teacher. “You can start seedlings in the spring, and then the project can be completed in the summer as the plants grow,” she says.

5. **Scavenger Hunts.** Instead of handing out worksheet packets, consider asking students to complete as many items as possible on a checklist of fun activities—such as going to a museum and looking at the stars through a telescope. Or, you can ask students to keep their eyes peeled for real-world examples of the things they’ve learned in math class. “How many places in your summer travels can you find math concepts—at the grocery store or at the laundromat?” Roser says. “Where can you find the biggest number, where can you find the smallest number? Where can you find shapes?” Roser says teachers might ask older students to interview someone in a career field that interests them.

6. **Digital Resources.** Many students today have access to websites and mobile apps that attempt to make learning and math fun. Rosen’s own children have used Khan Academy to brush up on their math skills. “They definitely learned from it,” she says. “It’s engaging, because it’s online, and they were able to measure their accomplishments.” Teachers can help out by giving parents lists of age-appropriate, research-backed resources. Read about popular examples here.

7. **Journaling.** Toward the end of the school year, Natalie Simms, an elementary teacher in Oakcliff, has her students decorate journals, and then asks them to write in the books once or twice a week during the summer. “We brainstorm a list of topics they can write about—an adventure you go on, or the day you went swimming, or a friend you finally got to see who lives far away,” she says. “Some of them bring it back to me next year and say, ‘Look what I did over the summer!’”

8. **High-Interest Reading Lists.** Instead of handing out an endless list of classics for kids to wrestle with over the summer, ask students to create their own summer reading lists, based on their interests or upcoming events. “If a book is becoming a movie, or an author is coming to town, the kids get a little bit more excited than if you just say, ‘Go read a couple of books over the summer,’” Simms says.
Burlington Board Breaks Promises in Contract Talks

Three years ago, the Burlington Education Association and the city’s school board agreed to a unique contract designed to make subsequent negotiations easier, more predictable and cheaper.

“This benchmark agreement balances Burlington’s economic position in Chittenden Count against the various challenges provided by Vermont’s most urban school district,” said the then-board chair, Alan Matson.

Added the then-superintendent, “I am delighted that this document breaks ground on building some new ideas into the contract that reflect our collective commitment to remodeling our educational system for the realities of 21st Century life.”

What a difference a few years makes.

The current board chairman wants to strip the so-called living contract language – which promises to set Burlington teacher pay squarely in the middle of the middle of Chittenden County contracts – because he wasn’t the one who signed the contract.

He also has led a process that has kept teachers, parents, students and city residents largely in the dark about where the district’s money goes and is slated to go.

Fran Brock, the newly elected president of the BEA, recently pointed out that the board chairman’s assertion that the currently-in-effect contract be ignored because he wasn’t around when it was negotiated is misguided.

“Yes board membership can and does change, just as the elected officials of Congress, the state legislature and the city council also change with each election,” Brock said. “That is key to the republican form of government we adhere to in this society. But changes of individuals do not – and must not – negate the conscientious and deliberate work of prior boards.”

The association has attempted to reach a settlement with the board for months, but has been stymied by broken promises, lack of transparency and an unwillingness to acknowledge the terms of a contract negotiated three years ago.

The district has also spent money on consultants, economists and lawyers. “The public is still waiting to see the financial balance sheet that clearly and accurately explains what is being funded at all levels of the district, including consultants and lawyers,” Brock said. “The idea that we are to simply trust the hired consulting ‘experts’ and their analysis of the numbers is simply wrong, disrespectful and breeds distrust.”

The board and the association presented their cases before a neutral fact-finder last month; a fact-finding report is expected shortly after this newspaper went to press.

The teachers are in the final year of a three-year contract that was ratified in 2013. Teachers were negotiating based on the “living contract” agreement, and they thought the board of commissioners were on the same track. It became crystal clear over the last several months that they had no intention of keeping the promises they made.

“One of the most important things we teach our students is trust, honesty and keeping commitments,” said Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen. “We strive to make sure that we act in the same way, too. It is disappointing that the current board chairman and others in Burlington want to throw away a tool that would make reaching contract settlements easier and less contentious.

“I hope they come back to the table, recognize their mistake, and reach a settlement with the hundreds of dedicated teachers who always put the needs of Burlington’s students first.”

For the latest developments on the talks please visit vtnea.org/burlingtontalks.
Deja Vu Again: Rutland NE Paras, Drivers at Impasse

At this time last year, the hard working bus drivers and paraeducators of the Rutland Northeast Education Association were reeling from an imposition.

Despite an impressive organizing effort and crisis buildup that forced the board to come back to the table and negotiate a settlement (on the eve of a potential strike), the board is at it again. The only local without a contract in the Addison-Rutland region, the bus drivers and paras are at impasse over a bizarre and unnecessary health insurance proposal.

In essence, the board has proposed eliminating health insurance cost-sharing arrangements and replacing them with what amounts to a block grant. In other words, rather than keep in place a traditional system that has served both the district and its lowest-paid employees well, the board – apparently at the direction of its negotiating chair James Rademacher (a surgeon) – wants to give each employee a set dollar amount so they can go “shopping” for insurance.

Such an offer was considered a non-starter by the local. Indeed, such an arrangement means that paraeducators and bus drivers – many of whom make $20,000 a year or less – would be responsible for any increases in the cost of those insurance plans. Under the current arrangement – in place in virtually every local in Vermont – employers and employees share the costs (with the employer generally paying more than 85 percent).

Going into the next school year without a contract is very rare in Vermont right now; fewer than five other locals are in the same boat as Rutland Northeast.

The sad thing is that it didn’t have to be this way. In the fall, when the board and the local reached a settlement, the association sought a third year on the deal, knowing that going into this year was already shaping up to be difficult as a result of changes to VENH plans. The board refused.

“I sincerely hope that the board will realize what this impasse will do to our fellow members, some of the hardest-working and lowest-paid school employees in the district,” Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen said. “But I know this group is strong, unified and willing to fight for what is best for the district’s children.”

Windsor Northwest Food Service Jobs Saved

Even in Vermont, the relentless push to privatize public services rages on. The latest episode from earlier this year has a somewhat happy ending – thanks entirely to strong organizing efforts by members, parents and community members who put kids’ needs above giving private companies a road to easy profits.

The Bethel, Stockbridge and Rochester School Boards collected bids earlier this school year to hire private companies to run the food service programs and buses next year. “Eliminating school-run programs to save a few dollars and in the process cutting the jobs of loyal food service and transportation employees is not fair,” said Martha Allen, Vermont-NEA’s president. “It’s also not the best way to provide essential services for our children.”

In a petition signed by hundreds, the locals spoke highly of their colleagues. “Most of our school food service and transportation employees are long-term, loyal and committed employees.

These staff members have played by the rules and worked hard for the districts,” the petition said. “These employees often go above and beyond what they’re expected to do, especially for students in need. As members of the East Branch Education Association and Upper Valley Education Association, they’ve negotiated fairly with the school boards since a union formed over 15 years ago (Stockbridge 8 years ago). These people are our hard working neighbors; many of whom don’t make a livable wage.”

It’s amazing what happens when members organize: the community rallies and school boards take notice.

Through a quick campaign involving social media, one-on-ones, a petition and shows of solidarity, food service jobs in Bethel, Stockbridge and Rochester were saved from the privatization chopping block. The boards in those three communities listened to residents, members and others who know that these hard-working public employees deliver the best value for the area’s students. Unfortunately, the boards didn’t do the same for the districts’ bus drivers – although they did negotiate severance packages.

“I’m grateful for such strong community support for my fellow members and the hard work they do on behalf of students,” said Allen, the Vermont-NEA President. “While I am so sorry that we couldn’t prevent the privatizing of busing services, keeping our hard-working ESPs in the cafeteria is a victory for all of us.”

Privatizing public services does one thing: let private companies earn profits, profits that depend on taxpayers footing the bill. These companies typically offer poorer quality, pay their employees less, and take control out of the hands of local voters. And while the bid to keep the transportation jobs in public hands failed, the victory for food service workers was hard-fought.
RA Delegates Stand Up for Social Justice, Unity

By Tim Walker, NEA Today

The 95th NEA Representative Assembly (RA) kicked off on the morning of July 4 with the typical energetic celebration, as the 7,000 delegates danced to sounds of Prince and Michael Jackson blasting through the Washington, D.C., Convention Center. But, as NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia took the stage to deliver her keynote address, the mood quickly changed.

“We will not begin without honoring those who lost their lives for no other reason than that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender,” Eskelsen Garcia informed the delegates. “Today, we mourn with Orlando.” Forty-nine educators then filed to the front of the stage with the images of the 49 people who were killed in the Pulse nightclub shootings in Orlando on June 12.

“There’s a real world out there, and it’s not a safe place. It’s dangerous, and the work we’ll do in this safe place is important, because it has the chance to change the world out there. That dangerous world needs us,” Eskelsen Garcia said. “We’re living under a toxic, choking environment where entire groups of people are demonized, targeted and terrorized.”

As the top decision-making body for the 3 million-member NEA, the RA responded by approving a new business item, calling on the association to join a national effort to prevent acts of violence targeted at LGBTQ individuals and to protect their civil rights. The NBI calls on a multi-pronged approach in the courts and legislatures.

The delegates also took action on the school-to-prison pipeline, approving a new policy statement. The statement is framed as a call to action to help create awareness of the issue by educating educators and the public about the striking racial disparities among the students most affected by it.

“We are making a long-term investment. An investment that will command persistence and struggle and commitment and a whole lot of work from every single one of us,” said NEA Vice President Becky Pringle.

Fear and divisiveness has always been used as a cudgel by politicians, but the ascent of Donald Trump – and his toxic brand of racial demagoguery – has magnified the stakes of the upcoming election. On July 5, delegates were visited by the presumptive 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, whose vision for the nation, said Eskelsen Garcia, believes that a nation is stronger when standing together, not divided.

In her address to the RA, Clinton also spotlighted her priorities for public education, vowing to elevate the teaching profession, de-emphasize standardized testing, and harness community resources to help create great public schools for every student regardless of ZIP code. It’s time to stop the war on teachers, Clinton told the delegates.

“I’m with you. If I’m fortunate enough to be elected president, educators will have a partner in the White House – and you’ll always have a seat at the table,” she announced to resounding cheers from the delegates, who following the speech voted to overwhelmingly recommend Clinton for the general election.

NEA members were instrumental in the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act that ended the era of No Child Left Behind. For shepherding through a better law and for listening to the voices of educators, NEA presented its 2016 Friend of Education Award to Sens. Patty Murray of Washington and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, who both accepted the honor in person.

The RA also spotlighted the 2016 NEA Social Justice Activist of the Year, the California-based Union City Educators, who have brought Filipino heritage into the schools through ethnic studies curriculum, student and community engagement, and activism.

Delegates heard from NEA Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Doreen McGuire-Grigg, who spoke of the herculean efforts of ESP throughout the nation. She advocated for the inclusion of ESP, and underscored the value they bring to other educators and students.

“We are more than partners, we are problem-solvers. We are an untapped resource and we are here to support the whole student, the whole school and the whole community. We are the secret weapons,” McGuire-Grigg said.

In her speech, 2016 National Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes urged delegates to never underestimate the power they have to transform the lives of their students.

“Students should see their teachers as someone who cares about their academic success and their personal growth,” Hayes said. “Someone who cares about their families and their communities. Someone who takes the time to learn their stories and understand their

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NEA RA: Doing What’s Right for America’s Kids

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“It’s often hard for people in a state with so few people of color to really know how destructive racism is, much less racism that baked into our schools, our courts, our very society,” she said. “That’s why I am so proud of our national union for tackling this head-on, and being in it for the long-haul.”

Martha also was able to inject another key concern of hers into the national conversation: providing school-based mental health services for students and their families.

“We have a simmering epidemic of students acting violent toward teachers and paraprofessionals,” she said. “And one of the key reasons for this is that we don’t give students and families who need mental health services an easy and seamless way to use them.”

Most days, the Vermont-NEA delegation began shortly after 6 a.m. and didn’t finish business until around 6 p.m. They managed to have a little fun – check out the picture of Hillary Clinton “wearing” a Bernie t-shirt – and they went out to catch a Nationals game.

“The RA is one of those times that we get to know that we are part of a larger movement, a movement based on doing right by America’s children,” Allen said. “And I want every fellow member to never forget that we are not alone, we are strong, and we are doing some of the most important work there is.”

We Owe Our Students. They Are Watching Us

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standoffs. On the other hand, each time another act of violence interrupts a brief interlude of “peace,” our souls cry out. Our hearts break again.

Like you, I am so very weary of crying. I am so very weary of anger. I am so frustrated by the easy access to high-powered weapons that paved the way for Sandy Hook, Orlando, and Dallas.

We have, unfortunately, developed a catalogue of resources for how we speak to students about the shootings, ambushes, snipers, random violence, targeted attacks. But there are not enough resources in the world to make sense of the senseless.

One man in Dallas put it this way: “I’m tired of waking up every morning and seeing the same thing over, and over, and over again.”

As people who work in our nation’s public schools, NEA members are public service professionals, and we have a special bond with the men and women who devote their lives to securing the safety of all of us. We mourn with the city of Dallas and with the families of the slain police officers. In communities across the country, we work hand in hand with police officers. Like them, we want to ensure that kids have the opportunities for a good life that they deserve.

At the same time, we recognize that there are some uses of deadly force by police officers against black and Latino people that call into question their training, and sometimes, even their assumptions about race and communities of color.

Those two perspectives – our solidarity with police officers and our concern about institutional racism and the way minorities are sometimes viewed and treated by police – are not in conflict with each other. What we all recognize is that there is a need by all of us for more comprehension and compassion. We cannot demonize those we don’t understand. We cannot hate entire groups of people because of the actions of some.

Because we are educators, I believe we have a special role to play in creating understanding. In building community.

In the coming weeks, I challenge all of us to think about what we can do and how we can be beacons in this nation that all of us love so dearly. We owe it to our students. They are watching us.

Social Justice, Unity Dominate 2016 NEA RA

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journeys. We are the people who ignite passions in students.”

“How do we ensure that educators will always serve this critical role?” asked NEA Executive Director John Stocks. After all, more than 2 million new educators will be entering the workforce over the next five years alone. In his address to the RA, Stocks warned the delegates that the new generation of educators may not necessarily understand how vital their association can and will be to them and their students.

“We must become relevant to them, to help them meet the changing needs of their students...to help them be successful educators, and to tap into their idealism,” Stocks said. “And we must act with urgency.”

At every RA, delegates are charged with electing new NEA leaders. In addition to voting for new Board of Director members, delegates also re-elected Maury Koffman of Michigan and Kevin F. Gilbert of Mississippi to serve another three-year term each on the NEA Executive Committee.
This piece comes from “Lily’s Blackboard,” the blog of NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia.

“Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars... Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”  – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Like many of you, I cried this morning. I cried for the five officers in Dallas who were shot in cold-blooded fashion during a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest. I cried, again, for the men in Baton Rouge and St. Paul, Minn., who were fatally shot by officers only days ago.

I cried when I listened to the accounts of witnesses to the hell in Dallas. Their shock, fear, and utter despair made me flinch.

I cried when I watched the graphic footage of Philando Castile and heard his final moans as his girlfriend told the world of the unfolding tragedy.

I cried when I saw the equally graphic footage of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and heard the shots that ended his life.

I cried when I heard the Dallas police chief tell us that the Dallas sniper said he wanted to kill white police officers in retribution for the fatal shootings of black men.

I cried when I watched President Obama – for the second time in less than 24 hours – address violence in this nation. It was not lost on me that when he spoke, he was 5,000 miles away attending his last summit of NATO, an organization that exists in part to safeguard the freedom and security of member nations.

I cried when I contemplated what we, as educators, will tell our children this time.

I cried when I thought about the world they are seeing, the pain they are witnessing, the sadness they are feeling.

I cried when I considered the psychic damage to each and every one of us. On the one hand, we are becoming inured to the constant shootings, the ever-present dangers, the lockdowns, the...


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REMEMBER TO VOTE in August Primary!

You can cast your ballot in this year’s primaries any time between now and election day, August 9. See your town clerk for an early ballot, or head on over to vtnea.org/earlyvoting. Don’t forget: your vote is your voice!