

Senate Bill 77

School District Leave Policies

Sponsor: Margaret Dayton

Prohibits granting paid association leave. Requires reimbursement to a school district of the costs for certain employees, including benefits, for the time that the employee is on unpaid association leave.

- On November 1, 2009, *The Office of Legislative Auditor General of the State of Utah* released a report on Association Leave in Utah's School Districts. The most revealing and obvious finding in the OLAG report, **"The association president represents the interests of teachers which, at times, conflict with the interests of the district."** The report also found, **"Districts are not fulfilling their statutory responsibilities to ensure that association leave has a direct benefit to the school district."** http://www.le.state.ut.us/audit/09_bilr.pdf
- This bill addresses fiscal responsibility. We cannot afford to divert money away from the classroom, especially in lean budget years.
- Districts must be held accountable to taxpayers to spend their budgets directly on the education of children. Union salaries are not an appropriate expenditure.
- In opposition of the 2009 bill, HB381, UEA President, Kim Campbell stated, "This bill would take away the voice of teacher associations." (Deseret News Feb. 24, 2009). Unions are a private organization whose sole responsibility is to represent the interests of dues paying members. Taxpayers should not be asked to subsidize an organization that does not represent them, regardless of their claims about benefiting districts.

**This amount does not include the district's portion of payroll taxes and benefits.*

| District | Association President | Release Time Granted | Teacher Salary UtahsRight.com | % of Teacher Salary Paid by District | Approximate Amount Paid to Association President by District* |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Davis | Susan Firmage | Full-time | \$50,549 | Up to 50% | \$25,274.50 |
| Granite | Jay R. Blain | Full-time | \$56,492 | 50% | \$28,246.00 |
| Salt Lake | Virginia Ellison | Full-time | \$73,032 | 33.33% | \$24,344.00 |

*Other districts sampled were Jordan (who does not participate in association leave), Cache and Logan.

- After contacting three large districts in three states, OLAG found that, "the association president is given a full-time release from teaching duties, and **the education association pays the full cost of the president.**"

" But what does it mean to "directly benefit education?" This was the question posed in a March 1, 2009, Tribune Editorial (UEA Pay Deal). Their answer sums it up well. "It has evolved to mean, in practice, that some districts continue to fork out hefty amounts to pay people who are no longer working strictly for the district. In fact, in union parlance, these UEA officials are being paid by the employer, the opponent in contract negotiations. It's like having one foot on the ground and the other on a moving train."