



School Districts Help Union Collect Political Contributions

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Every Member Option (EMO) is a Colorado Education Association (CEA) political fundraising structure performed through school district payroll systems. Currently, the basic CEA active full-time membership includes a \$24 annual EMO contribution. Several of CEA's local chapters have also instituted a separate EMO. Automatically taken out of a teacher's paycheck as part of union fees or dues, the EMO political contribution may be refunded.

- ✓ School districts withheld union political funds from each member teacher's paycheck in 2003-04:
 - A nonrefundable National Education Association assessment to oppose or support ballot initiatives in Colorado and other states—**\$5**
 - For the CEA's EMO program—**\$24**
 - In some districts, for a local union EMO program—**As much as \$24**

- ✓ Many teachers are not aware of their political contributions:
 - Only three of 15 examined payroll deduction authorization forms disclose the EMO contribution.
 - For a teacher to receive an EMO refund, she must file a written request before a deadline.
 - Most teachers queried were not aware that a portion of their membership money was being used for political activities or that they could get an EMO refund.

- ✓ Most school districts surveyed either believe that they collect "only dues" or deny that they collect political funds for the CEA. Here are a sample of remarks from school districts when asked if they deduct funds for political activities:
 - **Westminster:** "You will need to contact the Association for this information."
 - **Cherry Creek:** "The district does not direct or transmit contribution [*sic*] for PACs."
 - *However, the authorization form used in Cherry Creek states otherwise.*
 - **Jefferson County:** "The district does not have any knowledge nor is it involved in the Every Member Option PAC deduction."
 - **Poudre, Widefield, and Harrison:** "No."

- ✓ One of a series of proposals might offer a solution to the practice of EMO payroll deduction:
 - Prohibit school districts from making payroll deductions for union membership fees altogether to ensure districts are not collecting political funds. Arrangements with banks for electronic fund transfers can be conveniently made.
 - If payroll deductions for union fees are allowed, school districts should be prohibited from withholding any funds that are used for political purposes.
 - If payroll deductions for political contributions are allowed, school districts should require any withholding form to disclose the amount of funds directed to the local, state and national organizations, the amount supporting political activities, and how to obtain a refund.

To learn more, read *Should Colorado School Districts Stop Collecting Political Funds?* by Mark W. Salley and Pamela Benigno—<http://www.i2i.org/article.aspx?ID=963>
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