

# Wyoming Education Association

Candidate: Cathy Connolly

Party: Democrat

Running for: House District 13

Date: May 26, 2008

## **Policy on Candidate Questionnaire**

Every candidate who desires to seek the endorsement of WEA-PACE, including incumbent office holders, must complete the official candidate questionnaire and participate in an interview with WEA representatives. The completed questionnaire and the information provided by the candidate is for internal use only, and shall not be disseminated to the media, the public at large, or the WEA membership at large. The chair of WEA-PACE, or the chair's designee, is permitted to characterize the views of a candidate with regard to responses on the questionnaire in broad terms, without reference to specific responses on the actual questionnaire, and especially in the context of explaining decisions of the WEA-PACE Council. Only under unusual circumstances, with the written permission of a candidate or former candidate, will the chair of the WEA-PACE Council (or the chair's designee) have the right to release a completed questionnaire for public use. Members of the WEA-PACE Council, WEA-PACE Steering Committee, the WEA Government Relations Commission, Director of Government Relations, and WEA Executive Committee shall have access to the data, as shall any WEA Professional staff member and the Information Specialist.. Candidate Interview Teams shall have use of the completed questionnaires pertaining to candidates interviewed by that team, but will immediately return those completed questionnaires to the district UniServ Director. Completed questionnaires and related data will be collected and secured after any use by any of the groups or individuals mentioned above. Any WEA-PACE member may request to see, but not to copy, the responses of a candidate in his or her specific legislative district, and such cases shall occur under the supervision of a UniServ Director, the Director of Government Relations, or a member of the WEA Executive Committee. Under no circumstances will hard or electronic copies of any completed questionnaire be released or given to any person. All hard copies, including the original, will be kept at the WEA main offices in Cheyenne, and in the case of legislative candidates, copies of completed forms will be in the possession of UniServ Directors whose districts include the constituencies of those candidates. WEA members who are not also contributing members of WEA-PACE may appeal, in writing, to the chair of WEA-PACE to see, but not to copy, the completed questionnaire of a candidate in his or her specific legislative district, in which case the district UniServ Director will be instructed to comply with the request under the same terms as would apply to a WEA-PACE member.

## **WEA Candidate Questionnaire – 2008**

*The following are WEA position statements on critical issues in the WEA Legislative Platform. For each issue, please circle the response that indicates the extent to which you oppose or support the WEA's position. Please provide any additional comments you wish to share in the space indicated, and attach additional pages if needed. Be sure that each written comment on those additional pages indicates clearly the position to which it refers. Thank you for participating in this important process.*

## **The Constitution of the State of Wyoming**

1. The WEA insists that the constitutional right of every child to an equal opportunity for a complete and uniform public education must be preserved as a fundamental right including the burden of proof on the state in any dispute over the application of that right. The WEA is committed to resist any attempt to weaken the fundamental right in any manner.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

## **Legislative Compliance with the Supreme Court Directive to Fund the Actual Costs of Education**

2. The WEA supports legislation that complies with the decision of the Wyoming Supreme Court that the state must fund the actual costs of K-12 education and that the actual costs of K-12 education include competitive salaries and benefits for all education employees as the basis for a quality experience for every child in every school, and that the legislature must fund those components of the system appropriately.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

3. The WEA supports legislation that requires the state to provide adequate and equitable funding for the delivery of the educational programs legally required by the state constitution (sometimes referred to as the “basket of goods and services”).

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

4. The WEA supports legislation that completely funds co-curricular activities (including, but not limited to, athletics, FFA, agricultural programs, art, music, theater, forensics, etc.) and the facilities needed to house them, as a part of the experience required for a modern education that meets the challenge of our times.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

5. The WEA supports legislation to completely fund vocational (or career and technical) education at levels that recognize the additional expense of such programs, and the need of such programs for up-to-date equipment and appropriate staff training.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

6. The WEA supports funding consistent with research validating that class sizes should be capped at 20 for grades K-6, and at 23 for grades 7-12.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

7. The WEA supports the continued commitment of the state to reimburse school districts for 100 percent of the actual costs of special education.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

## **Charter Schools**

8. The WEA supports innovation in public education, but believes that any plan such as charter schools must:
  - not negatively impact the regular public school program;
  - include adequate safeguards for all employees and students regarding health, safety, contract and employment provisions, non-discrimination, and equal educational opportunity;
  - be staffed by licensed professionals;
  - fully comply with all statutes and regulations required of other K-12 public schools;
  - be adequately funded and not divert current funds from the regular public school programs; and
  - periodically be appropriately assessed and evaluated.

**Level of Support: Mildly Support – See Comments Below**

## **K-12 Revenue Issues**

9. The WEA supports the continued commitment of appropriate and equitable revenue streams to the School Foundation Program as the source of funding for K-12 education. The WEA also supports the constitutional requirement that the legislature supplement the School Foundation Program from the general fund in the event of any shortfall.

**Level of Support: Support**

10. The WEA supports the constitutional requirement that the state must manage school trust lands for the benefit of Wyoming's school children, including competitive bidding of sales, leases, and other disposition of school trust lands, to ensure the greatest return to the trust.

**Level of Support: Support**

11. The WEA is opposed to voucher systems or tuition tax credits, as well as any other proposal that would divert or reduce funds from public education to any private, parochial, and/or non-accredited entity at any level.

**Level of Support: Support**

## **Public School Capital Construction**

12. The WEA supports funding of school capital construction from the wealth of the whole state. We also support the respectful and collaborative involvement of local trustees, officials, education professionals, parents and other citizens in the decision-making process

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

13. The WEA believes that decisions about physical facilities for schools and school capital construction should always be driven by research based educational programming for student needs and the WEA supports legislation that completely funds the best facilities and classroom technology to deliver the highest quality academic and co-curricular experience for every child.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

14. The WEA supports changes to the school funding model to provide appropriate funding for the actual cost of major and routine maintenance needs of all school district facilities. Currently the funding for routine and major maintenance is based on the square footage of buildings and number of students a school has, rather than on its facilities and their needed upkeep.

**Level of Support: Support**

### **Employee Rights for K-12**

15. The WEA opposes any action to weaken Wyoming's Teacher Employment Act, (Continuing Contract Law).

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

16. ESP Due Process - The WEA supports legislation to provide all non-certified support staff in school districts with due process rights similar to those other employee groups paid by state funds have, including state employees and certified teachers. Such Legislation must also require districts to comply with their own policies, procedures and statutory requirements.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

- WEA will have a bill in the 2009 session to accomplish this goal and it can be found at [www.wyoea.org/dueprocess](http://www.wyoea.org/dueprocess). (it was also included in the packet of information with this questionnaire) Should you be elected, would you vote for this bill? **YES (Note the included link does not work)**
  - Would you be interested in co-sponsoring of this legislation? **YES**
17. The WEA supports the right of education employees to participate in a process of collective negotiation for salaries, benefits, working conditions, and other professional concerns. We support legislation to establish guidelines to facilitate such practices between school boards and local employee organizations.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

18. The WEA insists that any consideration of "additional compensation plans", (pay for performance, merit pay, and etc.) - should be a matter of collaborative negotiations between school boards and local employee organizations, and must not be legislated or mandated at the state level.

**Level of Support: Support**

**Comments: I have some concern that this provision may allow rewards to teachers and staff in wealthier districts. However, I understand that the Interest Based Problem Solving boards have been effective at addressing these issues.**

### **Teaching Licensure and Professional Standards for K-12**

19. The WEA supports the maintenance of high standards for the teaching profession as established by Wyoming's Professional Teaching Standards Board, and believes that all students are entitled to fully certified teachers and administrators in all areas.

**Level of Support: Support**

**Comments: Exceptions to the standards may be supported for innovative or experimental programs. See comments below that pertain to Q-8.**

20. The WEA supports legislation to enhance the professional expertise of all employees in each school district by fully funding the costs of instructional facilitators as well as peer mentoring and support programs.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

### **Community College Priorities**

21. The WEA supports legislation that provides transparent, appropriate and equitable funding for the community colleges based on the wealth of the entire state, including provisions for the impact of inflation.

**Level of Support: Support**

22. The WEA supports funding for competitive salaries and benefits for community college employees, including health insurance, as well as working conditions commensurate with those in other occupations requiring comparable education and preparation.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

23. The WEA supports legislation to provide all community college employees with due process rights. Such legislation must also require college compliance with their own policies, procedures, and statutory requirements.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

24. The WEA supports the right of college employees to participate in a process of collective negotiation for salaries, benefits, working conditions, and other professional concerns. We support legislation to establish guidelines to facilitate such practices between boards of trustees and local college employee organizations.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

25. The WEA Supports the autonomy of the community colleges in the management of their separate fiscal and academic affairs, with only a coordinating role for the Wyoming Community College Commission

**Level of Support: Support**

**Comments: Adherence to transfer agreements between and among the community colleges and UW must be maintained to assure students access to full educational opportunities across the state.**

26. The WEA supports an official role for democratically elected representatives of college employees on the Community College Commission, including membership on key governance councils, committees working groups and task forces.

**Level of Support: Strongly Support**

The Due Process Bill referred to in Question 16 is in a separate attachment. Please add any additional information you feel would assist the teams here. If it pertains to a specific question, please note the question number. Thank you.

**Comments: Q-8 and Q-19**

**As not all children learn and thrive in the same type of educational environment, I'm a firm believer in both high quality public schooling for all children and school choice. Publicly funded lab schools, "alternative" or vocational/experiential high schools, "core knowledge" charter schools, and Montessori schools are all examples of possible educational alternatives that could be supported within a community. However, the small size of most Wyoming school districts makes implementing educational choice while maintaining support for traditional public schooling difficult. I will look for ways to do both well. Such innovative projects may require exceptions to some current rules.**