

## **HELP WITH THE HARD QUESTIONS**

Experience has shown that some questions about the Association arise time and time again. We call them the “hard questions” because nonmembers are sometimes more comfortable asking them than recruiters are answering them. Following are a few of those common questions and some suggested ways you can respond. Keep in mind that these are merely guidelines; they’re no substitute for your personal creativity and ingenuity!

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### ***I can’t afford it.***

You can’t afford not to! Dues are an investment in maintaining previous achievements and building for the future. For free legal protections, representation services, professional development opportunities, negotiations services, discount buying services, and more—it’s a pretty small investment. Many of us could say we can’t afford it, but the fact is that salary and benefits will never improve unless all of us work together.

### ***I get it all without joining.***

Oh no, you don’t. Many Association benefits are not available to nonmembers. Sure a non-joiner gets the same pay increase as everyone else, but what if you need legal help? School boards know how many people the Association represents...and the fewer there are of us, the lower the salary increase is likely to be to share with you. Representing only some of the unit members isn’t enough; 80 percent isn’t enough. Joining shows the school board, the county council/commissioners—and the legislature—that all of us are together behind the Association.

### ***I don’t like unions.***

A “union” is no more than a name that an organization of employees chooses to call itself. Because we do far more for members than simply provide bargaining support, we choose to call our organization an “association.” Whatever we call ourselves, the fact remains that we’re an organization of people helping people. We can be no better—or worse—than our members allow us to be by their support.

### ***I don’t think we should be involved in politics.***

You have a right to believe that, and you have a choice whether you want to contribute to the political action fund. You should know, however, that being in politics makes a difference. We can only make things better! Staying out of the system means you are ignored by those in the system.

***I'd join the local, but not UEA or NEA.***

There is really only one Association, and its whole is stronger than the sum of its parts. By joining together, the local, state, and national organizations are more efficient and effective than each could ever be individually. If our local were to attempt to provide just legislative lobbying and legal services alone, our dues would be \$1,000 or more! Besides, much of the information we use in bargaining and grievances is provided at no extra charge by the UEA and NEA. On top of that, a significant percentage of our UEA and NEA dues money comes back to fund local needs through our UniServ staff and other programs in our local.

***Why should I pay dues this year when I got little (or no) raise?***

Now is not the time to back away from the only group that is out there working for you. Without the strong support of UEA and local lobbyists, state funding for education could have been cut, and we could be facing layoffs and pay cuts. Remember, no salary increase, benefit, or right is given freely by school boards or politicians! Association dues give us the resources we need to win the salaries and benefits we deserve.

***My spouse belongs; I don't need to.***

Membership isn't altogether unlike an insurance policy. If one of you has an accident, it doesn't help if the other is covered. The same thing applies if one of you needs legal assistance. Membership benefits come with membership. Unless both of you join, you are giving only half support to your own cause. We need strength and numbers in local negotiations and in state and nationally lobbying. Both of you have a big stake in the success of your Association. Both should support it.

***I don't agree with a lot of what the Association does.***

Of course, it's your privilege to disagree. Few people agree with 100 percent of anything! But the Association prides itself on being a democratic organization. Members directly influence the decision-makers through a representative process at all levels of the organization. As a member, you have dozens of opportunities to influence and change the direction of the Association if you disagree. But if you're not a member, you can't change a thing!

***I don't like the NEA's position on (fill in the blank).***

NEA's policies, legislative goals, and resolutions are adopted by a democratic process by nearly 10,000 delegates to the annual NEA Representative Assembly. Some policies are unanimously supported, some are not. Some in fact, have strong minority opposition.

Association opponents often pick up on certain controversial issues and distort or exaggerate NEA's positions by using slick propaganda techniques to further their own cause and/or collect money. The truth is that dues money is rarely used to support these controversial resolutions.

The heart of NEA—and its budget and priorities—lies in its wide range of mainstream programs and services like local support, education legislation, professional publications, professional development workshops, etc. That's why most education employees in Utah belong to the Association (Be ready to produce the exact language of a specific resolution the prospect objects to. Often, the person has only heard about it, not actually read it in its entirety.)

***I don't think UEA should support "bad" teachers.***

Our justice system is based on the premise that a person is innocent until proven guilty. That's why the Association supports the right of every member to his or her full due process rights. That is an established principle, not something that is decided on a case-by-case basis. We provide financial support to make sure that members' rights are not violated through any legal or grievance-related hearings. We do not, however, provide legal or financial support to convicted felons.

***The UEA and NEA don't do anything for kids.***

Everything the Association does from lobbying for more money for schools to striving to give educators a stronger voice in their classroom is designed to ultimately improve learning opportunities for Utah's students.

And one of the major jobs of the Association is enhancing the image of public schools! We work actively to help American's think about public education in a positive way.