

Testimony of
Kreg A. Mendus, President
Greensburg Catholic Teachers Association
Before the Pennsylvania House Labor Relations Committee
In Support of House Bill 2626
Sept. 18, 2008

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Kreg Mendus. I am the President of the Greensburg Catholic Teachers Association (GCTA) and I am in my 30th year of being a member of catholic teachers' union. It is a pleasure to address this group in this historic confluence of Pennsylvania Labor Law and the Roman Catholic Church.

Contrary to what many people think, the Roman Catholic Church is not a monolithic institution, speaking with one voice, but it is a pluralistic institution. A fine line is sometimes negotiated between the rich history of social justice issues involving the rights of the worker that continue to this day and the interpretation of these teachings that are seemingly contradictory in practice.

This plurality of views has historically punctuated the difference between one aspect of the Church, the magisterial, and another aspect, the very body of the Church, its people.

For the non-schooled in the nuances of social justice issues within the Church, the difference can be seen as those who have the power and those who do not. The pluralistic views often translate into different interpretations and actions among the magesterium themselves, in other words one bishop acting in a very pro labor manner and another bishop seeing any organized labor as a threat to his sovereign rule.

Most individuals that remain teaching in a catholic school evolve their awareness that teaching is more than just being a teacher, but it is a mission, it is a witness to a value system that is shared by most individuals regardless of their specific religious tradition.

The nuts and bolts, or operation of running this school system with its unique charge, can sometimes be clouded by the nature of this diverse, pluralistic institution lending to conflict between labor and management and frankly, the impetus of these hearings.

The union contract functions as a framework for dialog when differences inevitably arise. It gives voice to the worker in the process of operation of a school creating an atmosphere of ownership, and delineates a structural reference in the advancement of new programs.

Within the guiding umbrella of the union contract our 53 person Union Membership has an average teaching history of 20 years of service lending to a stability in programs and curriculum that only comes through experience and time. Our union contract has provided the basis for a relationship between management and labor that can boast that there have been only 3 grievances filed since 1982. I am happy to say that the union has just ratified a new 6 year contract this past Monday that will continue to be the stabilizing force in the future in Greensburg.

We are at a crossroads in labor relations in this country much of which is beyond our control. I encourage you to extend the basic right to organize that has been afforded to others in this State and excluded from Catholic schools by actively working for the passage of House Bill 2626.