

Remember in November

Sponsors: Sara Attleson, Kennedy MS, ATF COPE Chair and James Macklin, Fine Arts

Discussion Item September 6, 2022

WHEREAS, right-wing extremists understand that public schools unify Americans, and;

WHEREAS, they also see, as polling consistently shows, that Americans value educators and want to invest in their public schools, and;

WHEREAS, to achieve their political goals, they sow distrust, undermine educators and public schools, and try to drive a wedge between teachers and families, and;

WHEREAS, the attacks are awful—like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis claiming that elementary school faculty are “instructed to tell” kids to change the gender they were assigned at birth or Donald Trump calling to “liberate” children “from the captivity of these Marxist teachers,” and;

WHEREAS, these attacks—just like the book banning and curriculum restrictions—are intended to create distrust and fear, and;

WHEREAS, Betsy DeVos and other extremists have continued the campaign, using harmless-sounding terms like “school choice” and “parental rights” to thinly veil their goal: to destroy public education and replace it with an unregulated voucher system that would increase economic and racial segregation, and;

WHEREAS, right-wing activist Christopher Rufo says openly that, to achieve this aim, they must be “ruthless and brutal” and “operate from a premise of universal public school distrust,” and politicians following Rufo’s playbook are banning books, dehumanizing LGBTQIA+ students, and demanding teachers remain neutral on—or worse, teach both sides of—Nazism, slavery, lynching, and other historical atrocities, and;

WHEREAS, the plan, released by Senator Rick Scott, chair of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, is to sunset every federal law, for example Medicare and Social Security, every five years, and;

WHEREAS, American parents support their public schools, in a January 2022 national survey by Hart Research Associates and Lake Research Partners, 78 percent of parents expressed satisfaction with their children’s schools’ handling of the pandemic, and;

WHEREAS, in a May 2022 poll of likely voters in battleground states by Hart, voters showed that they understand the challenges educators face. They identified the top three problems facing schools as politicization of education, shortages of teachers and staff, and a lack of support and respect for teachers, and;

WHEREAS, Americans share educators’ priorities. In a recent Hart poll, participants identified the most important goals schools should focus on:

- developing fundamental academic and life skills;
- investing in the essential knowledge and skills students need;
- focusing on reading;
- creating more community schools and career and technical education programs;

- partnering with parents; and
- fighting for the climate, culture, conditions, and compensation required for educators to do, and stay in, their jobs.

WHEREAS, when all members and their families and friends vote en masse for ATF endorsed candidates we successfully elect leaders who fund education, allocate decent raises, respect our professional judgment, and care about teaching and learning conditions; and

WHEREAS, our recent contract dispute with four members of the APS Board of Education cast a bright light on what happens when we lose elections; and

WHEREAS, this is a critical time to join forces because everything is at risk: our freedoms, our democracy, our schools and colleges, our basic economic safety net; and

WHEREAS, in a new NBC News poll, voters ranked threats to democracy as the number one issue facing the country, and;

WHEREAS, as Grace Paley, antinuclear, antiwar, antiracist feminist activist said, “the only recognizable feature of hope is action.”

Therefore, be it resolved:

- **We must act—to protect our public schools and to defend our democracy and our freedoms.**
- **We will organize our members with the goal of having a standing room only turnout for the ATF COPE Fundraiser on Friday, September 9th from 4-6:30.**
- **We will organize, mobilize, and get out the vote.**
- **We will vote in November as if our lives depend upon it—because they do.**
- **If we get out the vote, we will win.**



Note: except for a few sentences the content of this motion is directly quoting or paraphrasing AFT president, Randi Weingarten.