

# Forced-Unionism Abuses Exposed

The facts Big Labor bosses would rather you didn't hear about.

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*Compulsory unionism breeds corruption. In each issue of "Exposed," the National Right to Work Committee will highlight yet another example of union-boss abuse spawned and perpetuated by Big Labor's government-granted privilege to force workers to pay union dues, or be fired.*

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## **Teachers Protest Union Harassment, 'Thinly Veiled Threats'**

A *New York Post* editorial published May 19 provides a striking example of how teacher union officials' work rules, which they impose through their government-granted monopoly-bargaining privileges, cheat schoolchildren, rip off taxpayers, and undermine the very educational objectives teacher union officials claim to favor.

The editorial pointed to an apparent paradox: Published data show that there are 14 kids enrolled in New York City public schools for each one of the system's 78,000 teachers. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education reports that the average class size in New York City is about 25 kids.

What accounts for the discrepancy between 14-1 and 25-1 student-teacher ratios? A union contract that keeps an extraordinary number of teachers in non-teaching jobs, sends thousands at a time away for year-long paid "sabbaticals," and encourages still others to use up their maximum number of personal and "training" days, said the *Post*.

In her angry, lengthy response, published several days later, United Federation of Teachers (UFT/AFT) union President Randi Weingarten did not dispute the editorial's charge that wasteful UFT work rules make class sizes much larger than they otherwise would be.

Ms. Weingarten's silence on this point is very telling, because UFT and other teacher-union propaganda constantly advocates increased expenditures of taxpayer dollars on public schools as a means of decreasing class sizes!

Ms. Weingarten richly deserves to be skewered for her hypocrisy, but no one should assume that self-serving teacher union bosses speak for all or even most of the public school-teachers who are forced, under the laws of 20 states, to join or pay dues to a union in order to keep their jobs.

Most teachers who oppose union-boss contract demands that harm education do not dare to dissent publicly.

But nine teachers from South Boston schools, led by a former Massachusetts state banking commissioner, Alan Morse, published an open letter May 6 that, as described by the Boston *Globe*, blasts union officials and union militants for losing their focus on students and for resorting to harassment and "thinly veiled threats" to suppress dissent.

In an effort to improve Boston's poorly performing high schools, School Superintendent Thomas Payzant has split 10 of them up into small "learning communities," known as academies.

However, Boston Teacher Union (BTU/ AFT) officials have wielded the power they hold under the state's monopoly-bargaining law to sabotage this reform.

As the *Globe* reported in a June 1 editorial, "The sticking point is union [officials'] insistence that any veteran teacher who is released from an academy be allowed to bump a teacher with less seniority from another academy under the same roof. That undermines headmasters of the individual academies who are trying to retain their young, enthusiastic staffers."

In their joint letter, Mr. Morse and his colleagues argued forcefully that teachers should reject union-boss obstructionism and back changes that have the potential to benefit schoolchildren.

"We didn't choose BPS [the Boston public schools] for its union," they wrote. "We chose it in order to make a difference for kids and to play a role in urban high school reform."

These teachers' willingness to publicly stand up to the BTU hierarchy may have helped convince the city's School Committee to take the bold step of shutting down two high schools and reopening them, as of July 1, as truly independent academies. The School Committee's goal is to protect the ability of headmasters to hire or retain the best person for the classroom, despite teacher union officials' furious opposition.

But genuine, permanent school reform in Massachusetts, New York, and many other states can only occur after the state labor-law provisions authorizing monopoly bargaining and forced union dues in public schools are eliminated.

When honest, conscientious teachers are no longer forced to accept the likes of Randi Weingarten as their "exclusive" bargaining agent, then schoolchildren may actually get to benefit from the services of as many teachers as taxpayers are paying for.

But under the system that currently prevails in Massachusetts, New York and the 32 other states with statewide teacher monopoly-bargaining laws, well-intentioned reformers like Mr. Payzant will keep fighting a steeply uphill battle.