



Dear Julie,

Tonight, the people of Ohio took back their state. Their historic vote to repeal Senate Bill 5 marks the first time that the collective bargaining rights of public employees have been upheld on a statewide ballot. Clearly and emphatically, Ohioans told the politicians who passed Senate Bill 5 that they would not turn their backs on the people who watch theirs. The voters saw the public services our members provide as vital to their communities. It is a message that will be heard in other statehouses around the country.

For the past three years, our union and our members have been vilified and scapegoated as if we were the cause of the recession that threatens the American dream. In state after state, the rights of trade unionists are under attack.

Ohio was a prime example. The passage of Senate Bill 5 earlier this year threatened to take away basic collective bargaining rights for public employees.

This was really a battle for the soul and value system of Ohio and the nation. It was about the haves and the have-nots, the 1 percent and the 99 percent.

A victory for the middle class, a message for politicians

All over our nation tonight, firefighters, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, bridge inspectors and social workers are cheering because in Ohio, the middle class won big.

The vote sends a clear signal that Ohioans will not sit idly by while politicians scapegoat hard-working public employees for an economic crisis they did not create.

Those who would dare try to strip collective bargaining rights away from hard-working citizens will now think twice. Ohio voters made it clear to them that there is a price to pay for turning your back on the middle class.

A triumph of people standing up to power

The repeal of Senate Bill 5 resulted from an incredible grass-roots campaign that engaged a broad coalition of unions, community groups and individual citizens from all corners of the state.

More than 10,000 volunteers collected 1.3 million signatures to place the issue on the ballot, and then worked tirelessly to make sure their families, friends and neighbors understood what was at stake.

AFT members were instrumental

Our members have always been our most powerful asset, and that power was on display once again in Ohio. When I visited Cleveland 10 days ago, I was so inspired by the heart and soul our members

were putting into the campaign. The Cleveland Teachers Union phone bank made well over 300,000 calls. Volunteers like Joanne Qunnie, a paraprofessional, put in countless shifts. Linda Golba, a retired teacher, gathered thousands of signatures. And Annette Chase, a full-time teacher, worked up to 20 hours a week making sure that her fellow Ohioans knew what was at stake.

The Ohio Federation of Teachers, led by President Sue Taylor, was a prominent partner in the statewide coalition, and effectively utilized staff and resources from AFT and other state and local affiliates to mobilize members and reach out to the broader community. The skill and expertise of our affiliate leaders, staff and volunteers were put to the test, and they proved they were up to the task.

Other AFT affiliates sent incredible numbers of volunteers and resources. The victory would not have been possible without the help they provided.

Finally, the presidents of our Ohio locals, who mobilized their members and forged crucial ties with their communities, deserve our special thanks: Dereck Uitto, Vikki Bell, Lisa Petrucci, Evan Luzar, Roslyn Painter-Goffi, Martha Davis, Bryan Trego, Jay Bodnar, Betty Knittel, Derry Hooks, Julie Sellers, Brian Constance, Adam Staley, Tom Schmida, Raymond Kikta, David Quolke, Victoria Flanigan, Barb Richardson, Rebecca Wells, Ronnie Childress III, Pete Theodore, Beth Earl, Cheryl Buehler, Melissa Cropper, Shari McCaslin, Roxie Bartley, Dave Tomaino, Mary Jo McFarlane, Keith Cullison, Angela Svirbely, Dave Sanford, Tammie McCale, Linda Wolf, Becky Blevins, Bev Lucas, Peggy Giuliano, B.J. Trainer, Rod Miller, Dave Shafer, David Metheny, Tracey Paradyse, Gail Swartz, Peggy Bredbeck, Theresa Schroeder, Jack Fatica, Sylvia Washburn, Kevin Dalton, Becky Creighton, Ken Ollish, Chuck Rollins, Floyd Collins, Kim Bickford, Larry Mengerink and Todd Paul.

We have more work to do

But we must keep in mind that the same politicians who supported Senate Bill 5 also passed a state budget that cut vital funding for local communities and classrooms by more than \$3.5 billion. There is still much work to be done.

We thank everyone who played a part in the Ohio victory—from those who braved the freezing temperatures to protest Senate Bill 5 at the state Capitol, to the thousands of volunteers who gathered signatures to place the issue on the ballot, to the thousands more who worked tirelessly to defeat it.

Tonight we celebrate a great victory for Ohio. Tomorrow we get back to work.

In solidarity,
Randi Weingarten
AFT President