

**TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH DEL GROSSO, PRESIDENT NEWARK
TEACHERS UNION, Local 481, AFT/AFL-CIO**

MARCH 5, 2011

RE: SENATE BILL NO. 1455

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR
THE CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY

Let me begin by saying there are concepts to like in this bill, including the language on mentoring, professional development, and teacher privacy.

I wish to make something very clear. This proposed Act completely destroys the rights of New Jersey teachers who have successfully led New Jersey's students to the pinnacle of success when compared to results in other States. Why is success being punished and why have New Jersey teachers become the victims of legislation that leaves teachers in New Jersey with rights no greater than existed for public employees in the 1920s.

This Act, in its present form, emasculates due process and the time served principle of seniority which is the cornerstone for teacher protection against injustice in the workplace.

The underlying reasoning behind the existing tenure act was spelled out by our New Jersey Supreme Court who said in 1982:

"When enacting the tenure laws for teachers, the Legislature was responding to concerns regarding those teachers who had devoted their efforts to an employment relationship with a local school district, and sought to protect such teachers from any arbitrary termination of that relationship. Such statutory rights were perceived to foster "a competent and efficient school system by affording to principals and teachers a measure of security in the ranks they hold after years of service." Tenure 'prevents school boards from abusing their superior bargaining power. in contract negotiations.' It protects

employees from dismissal for 'unfounded, flimsy or political reasons.' Once the status of tenure is earned, it provides a measure of job security to those who continue to perform their jobs properly. . ."

This Act accomplishes just the opposite of the intent of 18A:6-10 in a climate which is so politically motivated that teachers will be left without due process rights and will literally become serfs under the boot of political parties and political bosses. Rampant political patronage will exist in school systems where Boards of Education can hire and fire almost at will. The public in New Jersey do not want this.

On par, the bill puts New Jersey teachers, who have done a great job, in bondage to politicians and political bosses who every day are carted off to jail in handcuffs because of political corruption and influence peddling.

This bill will only foster corruption in education because of power given to political organizations that will come to control educational employment.

Governor Christie said, and let me paraphrase – “There are two streets, each with their own views. We need to find the boulevard of consensus – where both streets merge and New Jersey children and teachers win.”