

Making choices

Missouri has two major teacher groups. Here's the reason why.

At one time there was only one teacher association in Missouri — the Missouri State Teachers Association. MSTTA was one of 10 state organizations that founded the National Education Association in 1857. However, that changed in 1972, a year that became a watershed for the education profession in Missouri. MSTTA delegates were under intense pressure to fall in line with NEA's unification policy.

The new policy would mean all members would be forced to pay dues to the national association, a policy most MSTTA members felt violated their freedom of choice and went against MSTTA's strong belief in local control. There was growing dismay among Missouri teachers that NEA was becoming an all-out labor union.

Clearly, a vote for unification would have been against the will of the membership, but a vote against unification would have meant censure by the powerful national association. The independent-minded Missouri teachers held their ground and voted down unification. Retribution was swift — total disaffiliation from the national organization.

NEA meant to make an example of Missouri. What the national leaders could not foresee was that Missouri would *become* an example for others to follow. Indeed, MSTTA's courageous stand against forced unionism has been a model of choice. Across the nation, independent education associations are growing as educators return to a professional philosophy that puts children first.

Because of MSTTA, you and other Missouri teachers have a choice. As a Missouri educator, you are free to join a professional association, you can join a union, or you can belong to nothing at all. That's a privilege Missouri teachers take for granted. But in the 20 states where forced unionism is in effect, teachers must pay union dues even before they can set foot in the classroom.

The MSTTA message is freedom — freedom of choice, freedom to do your job the best way you see fit. That's why 44,000 Missouri educators choose MSTTA — the voice of Missouri teachers.