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The Wisconsin Patriot Coalition

Teachers' Unions Abuse Student Trust and Misuse Taxpayer Dollars

(Madison) – Members of the Wisconsin Patriot Coalition (WPC) have watched with growing concern all week as public-employee unions have used children and adolescents to further their own aims. We find it particularly troubling that teachers' unions appear to be primary facilitators of this strategy. They seem willing to ignore the broader negative implications and consequences of such action in relationship to students and taxpayers alike.

WPC has had representatives at the State Capitol Building every day this week. We have seen an increasing number of children of school age who, on a weekday, should be in class absorbing the basics of math, science, English, and history—learning that taxpayers support. Instead, they have been encouraged to skip class, in some cases for several days. Children are wandering in and around the Capitol building, carrying signs that bear union catchphrases and talking points. They are engaging in loud union chanting that, when quizzed, they don't seem to understand. Worse still, children and adolescents were, on Thursday, observed to participate in the direct harassment of legislators and their staffers in a mob atmosphere.

Nearly every child with whom WPC members spoke at the Capitol this week wrongly believed that their teachers' jobs were at risk, that school funding would be cut, or that favorite courses or programs would be eliminated. No such measures are currently on the table. Yet, those are the battles these children think they are helping to fight. Where did they get these false impressions if not directly from their teachers and, indirectly, from the unions that represent those teachers?

Teachers have a sacred trust in relationship to their students and a profound responsibility to taxpayers. Neither the communication of union propaganda in the classroom nor the subsequent recruiting of children into a labor dispute meets required principles and standards. Such actions are an abuse of the natural faith a student places in a teacher. They are an abuse of parents' confidence. They are an abuse of the resources state taxpayers provide in funding public education.

To be clear, students learn as much from a teacher's choices and behavior as they do from the textbooks a teacher uses or the lesson plans they deploy in the classroom. Engaging in "sick-outs" in order to protest at the State Capitol is lying and a breach of contract. Encouraging students to be complicit in such behavior in an effort to get one's own way is exploitative, particularly when the reasons for that protest are not truthfully communicated. It likewise fully merits termination of employment. Fostering mob mentality in children in order to frighten legislators and taxpayers is nothing short of criminal and should be prosecuted. Such behavior from teachers and teachers' unions should not be tolerated.

Pre-printed union signs visible everywhere at the Capitol this week read: "Care for educators like they care for your children." The WPC deeply respects teachers who, indeed, take their relationship of trust with students and taxpayers seriously. We know that many do. Those who do not must be held fully accountable. We sincerely hope that school districts will wisely take the appropriate action in relationship to any teachers who have cared first for themselves and their union rather than, more properly, for students, parents, and taxpayers.

The WPC is comprised of local conservative grassroots groups based in communities across Wisconsin. It exists specifically to develop and advance: legislation that adheres to unalienable rights and individual freedoms as recognized by the founders of this nation; the framework for limited government set forth within the United States Constitution; free-market solutions; and educational initiatives that inform the public on such legislation, principles, and solutions.