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PACE

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MISSION STATEMENT: ***The Canton Professional Educators' Association initiates and supports positive changes in the public school system, promotes the educational profession, and actively serves as an advocate for its members.***

Comments from the President

The Election Is In Your Classroom

I hear the concern that CPEA is too focused on the election while teachers face overcrowded classrooms, declining morale, and the exhaustion of doing more with less. When you are struggling to get through tomorrow, another election message can feel disconnected from the help you need.

That frustration deserves a response. You deserve an association that listens, defends your contract, challenges unreasonable demands, and holds local leadership accountable.

You also deserve an association willing to confront the decisions that help create those conditions.

The election is already in your classroom.

It enters through funding for another teacher, support for a struggling student, and laws determining your power to negotiate working conditions. Political decisions rarely arrive wearing campaign buttons; they arrive as staffing reductions, additional responsibilities, and explanations of why there simply is not enough money.

Then you are expected to make it work.

Here is the bitter irony: asking CPEA to fight classroom conditions while avoiding politics asks us to challenge the consequences while surrendering influence over decisions.

As your president, I cannot accept that arrangement.

CPEA is a professional organization, a bargaining organization, and, absolutely, a political organization. Elected officials exercise power over our funding, bargaining rights, and retirement system. Protecting our profession requires confronting that power.

Our predecessors understood this. Ohio educators organized the association that became OEA in 1847; in 1853, lawmakers enacted its proposals to advance free, universal public education. Organizing helped turn an educational vision into public policy.

When Senate Bill 5 threatened collective bargaining in 2011, organized opposition took the fight to the ballot box, and Ohio voters repealed it. The guardrails survived because people acted.

We inherited those victories—and the responsibility to defend them.

Consider your investment: tuition, graduate coursework, licensure, retirement contributions, and decades of your life. Elected officials can diminish that investment through decisions you will spend years working under.

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Our vote is an act of professional self-defense.

None of this excuses poor local leadership. Administrators remain accountable for staffing, discipline, workload, and professional respect. CPEA must demand answers here while challenging policies at the state and federal levels that restrict our resources and rights.

Members deserve both efforts, pursued with urgency.

Every candidate seeking our support should answer one question: what will your decisions mean for our students, our working conditions, and our profession? No party owns our loyalty, and accountability must continue after Election Day.

Your classroom door cannot keep out a funding cut, an unfunded mandate, or a law weakening your voice. Those decisions cross your threshold whether we participate or remain silent.

You have every right to demand that CPEA fight for your classroom. I have a responsibility to carry that fight wherever decisions about your classroom are made—from Canton to Columbus to Washington.

It took political action to help build public education. It will take political action to protect it. When we vote, we help choose the conditions under which we teach.

