

From the press conference announcing the filing of a class-action lawsuit against the CTA and CFA unions to block funds for anti-Schwarzenegger electioneering:

Statement of Plaintiff Judith Liegmann
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Sunnyvale School District

September 22, 2005 (Sacramento, California)

I believe that the vast majority of my fellow teachers in California are still totally unaware that our union this month will begin deducting a hefty additional dues assessment from our paychecks. The reason is that CTA union officials notified none of us ahead of time that it was planning this money grab – funds to be spent purely for political purposes. The union has given us teachers no time to react one way or another.

What kind of treatment is *that* from an organization that purports to care about us and to represent us? I personally do not feel represented by the CTA union officials at all!

I learned about the union's plans, more or less by chance, shortly after their decision in June to charge us even more dues. I wrote a letter to the CTA requesting some information on how they planned to handle this extra assessment. I received no response. Subsequent phone calls and emails got me conflicting answers. First, I was told that I would certainly receive a rebate of the \$60 fee hike along with my regular rebate in October of this year. Shortly thereafter, CTA informed me that the \$60 would NOT be rebated to me. They were going to use my additional \$60 for the November election, whether I liked it or not.

I resent having a monolithic, powerful, coercive organization like the CTA announce to me what I think, and then tell me, "And by the way, we're seizing your money to support what you're supposed to think."

I personally would rather decide for myself, issue-by-issue and candidate-by-candidate, according to my own individual convictions, where I would like to put my money to work. I'm sure that a huge percentage of California teachers share my wish to exercise their right to political autonomy. If there is anything the Constitution guarantees us, it is our right NOT to have our political views dictated, our rights trampled, and money taken by a private organization that has the backing of the state.

The CTA should have given us teachers a chance to exercise our rights. CTA officials do not have a moral right to take that money from us, and we plead that the court takes swift action to protect our constitutional rights. To deny us that consideration would only compound the injustice.