

Testimony of Christine Marsh

Thank you, Senators, for giving teachers a voice in this important discussion. My classroom is set up in a circle for that very reason: I want my high school students to have a voice and to know that their voice matters.

The same philosophy has propelled me through 26 years of teaching. It is probably one of the reasons I was named the 2016 Arizona Teacher of the Year.

Giving teachers a voice is one of the reasons I have belonged to the National Education Association and the Arizona Education Association for 26 years. During my tenure as teacher of the year, I went to the Arizona state capital almost every week, where I met with legislators and testified before committees. Someone from AEA was almost always there as well, fighting alongside for our students. Witnessing that firsthand made me an even more loyal member.

In the post-Janus world, I expect educator activism to grow. I know from firsthand experience that teachers are not going away and not going to be silent.

This spring, before Janus was decided, the AEA teamed up with the RedForEd movement. For the first time in Arizona history, educators walked out of their classrooms and gathered at the capital to protest working and learning conditions. Nearly 70,000 people — mostly teachers — took part in the week-long protest. It helped them realize that they have a voice and that they can USE their voice. Now, the number of educators involved in related activities like ballot initiatives and legislative campaigns continues is growing as well.

The RedForEd movement gives me hope in this post-Janus world, a world in which teachers — and all public employees — are under attack. In response, we are becoming more engaged, speaking out, and organizing both locally and nationally.

As we have seen in Arizona, and on the national level, we are fighting groups with endless amounts of money who will not give up on their attacks. But we also know that no amount of money can silence America's teachers — we will continue to fight to keep public education thriving and ensure that educators get the respect they deserve.

I would like to close by thanking you again for inviting me and by assuring you that educators will fight any and all attacks on public education.