



The Education Trust

Six Reasons the Keep Our Educators Working Act Should be Amended to Require States Receiving Funds to End Seniority-Only Teacher-Layoff Policies

Teacher layoff policies that use seniority as the sole criteria:

Are job killers

- Seniority-only layoff policies require that more new, lower paid teachers be laid off to achieve the same cost savings as do seniority-neutral layoff policies.

Are quality-blind

- No matter how good a teacher is, if she hasn't been working for a district long enough she—and all of her talent—are gone. Even if she's a [teacher of the year](#).

Disproportionately impact high-poverty schools

- That's why the ACLU [is suing](#) the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Increase class size

- A recent NCTQ [report](#) shows that a district serving 34,500 students with an average class size of 23 and a \$10 million deficit that decides to cut staff based solely on seniority will need to lay off 200 teachers. This would raise average class size to 27. If the layoffs were done based on something other than just seniority, class sizes would not increase as much.

Undercut recent efforts to diversify the teaching force

- According to a recent [report](#) by the National Council on Teacher Quality, such policies can also negate states' efforts to diversify their teacher corps. In California, for example, school districts have increased the number of minority teachers by 14,000 since 2001. Layoffs of these teachers will erase any progress on diversity California has been able to make.

And teachers reject them

- A [survey](#) of 9,000 teachers in two school districts conducted by The New Teacher Project found that about **75 percent of teachers thought factors other than length of service should be considered** in layoff decisions. Even among teachers with 30 or more years of experience, a majority of teachers indicated that other factors should be considered.

In short, these mindless, mechanistic, and UNFAIR polices hurt our schools and students more than layoff policies that consider factors in addition to longevity.

That's why **The Education Trust** has joined with these organizations in [a letter](#) calling on Congress to amend the Keep our Educators Working Act to require that states receiving funds to consider quality and effectiveness—as well as seniority—in their layoff policies:

- **Children's Defense Fund**
- **Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights**
- **ConnCAN** (Connecticut)
- **Democrats for Education Reform**
- **Education Equality Project**
- **Education Reform Now**
- **Educators 4 Excellence** (New York)
- **League of Education Voters** (Washington)
- **The Mind Trust**
- **National Council on Teacher Quality**
- **The New Teacher Project**
- **Oklahoma Business & Education Coalition**
- **Partnership for Learning** (Washington)
- **Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence** (Kentucky)

Seniority should be a factor in these decisions, but not the *only* factor. Teachers need protection against arbitrary layoff policies. But factors such as past performance should—in a system that values the needs of students as much as it values the privileges of senior teachers—be considered when making layoff decisions.

If you would like more information about our proposal, please contact Kate Tromble at Ktromble@edtrust.org.