



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on December 3, 2016

AFT President: Betsy DeVos Will Destroy Public Schools

Government-funded public schools are “what made America great in the first place,” claims American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Randi Weingarten in the *New York Daily News*.

In the wake of Donald Trump’s announcement that he intends to nominate Michigan philanthropist and education activist Betsy DeVos (shown) to be his secretary of education, Weingarten writes to warn Americans that such a move threatens the “collective promise” made by all of us to “take and teach every child seeking an education.”



When exactly that vow was taken by the over 300 million residents of this country is not revealed in Weingarten’s piece. Nor does the AFT president explain how the public school system could have “made America great in the first place” when its establishment in America came after the founding era. But she does claim that the federally funded public school system is the “most democratic” of American institutions (a claim that might shock many public school kids’ parents), and a place “where we forge a common culture out of America’s rich diversity.”

She adds to her encomium to government-managed education the claim that there exists in America “a broad consensus that public schools are a treasure to protect.” Which begs the question: How does she explain the exodus from the public schools to home-schooling and other private-education alternatives in light of this supposed “broad consensus”?

Of course, she doesn’t. She offers no evidence of this overwhelming support of public schools, but she does disclose the “fact” that the nation’s public school children (85 percent of all American children, she claims) “deserve leaders who will strengthen them, not destabilize or defund them.”

For those who got a little lost in the double negatives, Weingarten insists that the best way to improve our children’s education is to stabilize (read: grant greater government control over) and to fund (read: raise taxes for) public schools.

We’ll return to Weingarten’s praise for government control and forced public funding of education in a moment, but first, let’s lay out the attacks she makes on Mrs. DeVos’s character and the warnings she shouts about the future of federal education under a Department of Education run by Mrs. DeVos.

First, tax dollars will likely be funneled to charter schools, Weingarten warns. She reports that Mrs. DeVos’s wealth and activism have “resulted in an explosion in the number of charter schools in her home state. Michigan now spends more than \$1 billion on charter schools every year. Eighty percent of the charter schools in Michigan are operated for-profit — the highest percentage in the nation. The weak regulation and lack of accountability of those schools landed Michigan a spot in what’s known as the Wild West of charter schools.”

The power of being financially advantaged is something Ms. Weingarten understands personally. As the



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president of the American Federation of Teachers, she accepts a salary of nearly \$500,000 a year.

Ms. Weingarten uses her personal wealth — as well as the wealth of the organization she heads — to promote progressives and their “charities” too. As [reported by watchdog.org](#), last October, AFT is a major financial backer of many of the nation’s far-left causes. Over the last couple of years, these donations and beneficiaries included:

- \$250,000 to the Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation
- \$250,000 to the Clinton Global Initiative
- \$100,000 to the Clinton-allied opposition research group American Bridge 21st Century
- \$1.5 million to the Democratic Governors Association
- \$450,000 to the Democratic super PAC Patriot Majority
- \$400,000 to the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee
- \$410,000 to progressive coalition America Votes
- \$115,000 to MSNBC host Al Sharpton’s National Action Network
- \$90,000 to the environmentalist BlueGreen Alliance
- \$15,000 to illegal immigrant advocacy group National Council of La Raza
- \$300,000 in donations to Economic Policy Institute
- \$160,000 to National Public Pension Coalition

And hundreds of thousands more were donated to a grab bag of progressive political and social organizations.

Where does AFT get all that money that it funnels to the Left and its political operatives? Forced union dues in many states. Watchdog.org reports:

In many states, [teachers can be required to pay AFT](#) to have a job. Even though mandatory union fees can only legally be spent on representation, the power to take money from non-members frees AFT to spend more member dues on politics.

Basically, when it comes to using wealth and position to influence education policy and purchase significant political power, Weingarten is an expert in the field, indeed!

Next, without actually bothering to bore readers with the evidence of her claim of widespread shady dealing, Weingarten describes the despicable situation that is “tragically common” at charter schools in the Great Lakes State:

A yearlong investigation of two decades of charter school records by the *Detroit Free Press* described the consequences of this lack of oversight, transparency and accountability. A charter school in the first percentile — barely above rock-bottom among all schools — had its charter renewed. Others closed abruptly, leaving families scrambling to find another school midyear. Nepotism, insider deals and financial impropriety were all tragically common.

That’s not all. According to Weingarten, Betsy DeVos worked to defeat a bill that would have “placed both Detroit’s charter schools and its neighborhood public schools under the same oversight authority.” Imagine that: There are people in Michigan (and elsewhere in the country) who presume to think they



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can manage the education of our nation's children better than the federal government!

Next, Weingarten expresses fear that Mrs. DeVos will fail to "protect and reassure our LGBTQ students" that their civil rights will be "vigorously enforced."

What's the cause of Weingarten's concern?

It seems Mrs. DeVos believes in traditional marriage and has "poured money into campaigns against marriage equality."

So, using the transitive property of character assassination, Weingarten wants to make sure that the nation's public schools will not be influenced by someone who believes in the millennia-old definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

Of course, Weingarten doesn't disappoint her ilk: She follows up her lament for the future of "LGBTQ" kids by doubling down on the divisiveness.

She muses whether Mrs. DeVos's support for traditional marriage and her alleged disregard for schools in inner cities will translate into disregard for the nation's "large numbers of black and brown students."

Next, Weingarten ends her hit piece by predicting that, "If confirmed as secretary of education, DeVos may achieve the biggest return on her investment to date — at a terrible and unconscionable cost to America's public schools and the students and families who rely on them."

What has been the return, one wonders, on the millions of dollars invested by Weingarten personally and on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers in social engineering interests, Democratic political action committees, and radically progressive public school policy-making organizations?

Finally, could it be that Weingarten so adamantly opposes Betsy DeVos's nomination as education secretary not because she fears the latter's support for school choice in government-financed education would destroy education, but because she minds the thought that she might soon have some competition in controlling its curriculum? Of course, the U.S. government has no constitutional authority to interject itself into the education sector to begin with, but Weingarten wants to use this unconstitutional intervention to build a national curriculum rather than move in the opposite direction.

Photo of Betsy DeVos: AP Images



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