

Save the Children, Fire the Teachers Unions

It started in Chicago, where an incredible 91% of union teachers voted to go on strike and refused to do what they get paid to do, which is teach. Then the union walkouts spread to Maryland, New Jersey and California.
By Stephen Moore

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, a liberal Democrat, has attacked the Chicago teachers unions for "holding kids hostage." She is right.

Why doesn't she call a state of emergency and disband the union to save the children from the union terrorists? Or tear up the contract because the unions have violated it? If she did, she would be a hero.

President Joe Biden keeps talking about how much he and his fellow Democrats in Washington care about "the children." Uh-huh. He has correctly stated that there is no health reason for closing schools. But in this latest episode of union child abuse waged against our school-age children, he does nothing. Maybe that is because more than 90% of the tens of millions of campaign dollars donated by the teacher unions go to Democrats.

It is time for a Ronald Reagan moment. In the first year of his presidency, in 1981, he fired thousands of illegally striking air traffic controllers. He broke the back of a militant union that put public safety at risk by refusing to show up to work. The airlines continued to operate, and the havoc that the unions were trying to impose on our national transportation system was averted thanks to Reagan's bold decision.

Let me be clear: There is no health or safety excuse whatsoever for teachers and students not to be in the classroom, as the first wave of COVID-19 should have taught us.

The nearly incontrovertible evidence shows that school closures have no positive effect on the spread of COVID-19. Many studies have shown that keeping children at home can increase the spread when students and teachers not in school are instead in the community, where infections spread more quickly.

A Journal of Global Health systematic review of 90 studies found that "opening educational establishments may not predispose children and adolescents to a higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection compared to adults. On the contrary, children and adolescents were more than 2-fold greater risk of infection in household and community settings than in schools. The school attendance may serve as a protective factor, which reduces children's chances of community contacts in a relatively isolated environment during school hours."

But the emotional and educational progress to children from school closures can be devastating. McKinsey found that students ended the last school year, on average, five months behind in math and four months behind in reading.

Another study from the Ohio State University found that "districts with fully remote instruction

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Expanded test scores declines up to three times greater than districts that had in-person instruction for the majority of the school year."
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The left loves to talk about social justice and income inequality. However, the children most adversely affected by the school lockdowns are poor, of a minority and below the median academic achievement. For top-achieving motivated students, remote learning can work just fine. For those who need schools the most, the underachieving, online learning is basically the same as no schooling.

What is to do? It is time for a national revolt against the evil empire of teachers unions that has become the worm in the apple of our education system. How outrageous it is that parents, taxpayers and politicians have to beg teachers to teach. The fact that more than 9 in 10 Chicago teachers don't want to teach tells us of the dismal quality of the people we are putting in front of our children.

What is the solution? First, if teachers walk out on our children, they should be fired and banned from ever teaching in a public school again -- just as happened with the illegally striking air traffic controllers.

Second, this is a school choice moment for America. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has correctly issued an executive order in his state declaring that if any school district shuts down, he will redirect the education dollars directly to the parents so they can send their children to private or religious or home schools that are open and teaching the students.

What is clear is that handing over political control of our schools to the unions has done irreparable damage to our children. They are the virus injuring the health and well-being of our children. But it is also true that if we, as citizens and voters, allow this hostage-taking to continue, then we are responsible for the damage. We are to blame if we keep electing politicians who genuflect to militant unions.

We need a heroic Reagan moment to end this tragedy. It stops now.

Free our children.

Stephen Moore is a senior fellow at Freedom Works. He is also author of the new book: "Govzilla: How The Relentless Growth of Government Is Devouring Our Economy." To find out more about Stephen Moore and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com