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NAME Back to School Statement of Support for Teachers

Before the 2017-2018 school year ended, thousands of teachers in [six states walked out](#) of classrooms to protest the woefully low salaries they take home for their efforts to educate the nation's young people.

[The National Association for Multicultural Education](#) knows that low pay for teachers has been a long-standing problem in the United States and urges school districts throughout the country to take the badly needed steps to increase the salaries of beginning and veteran teachers.

Teacher walkouts and rallies occurred in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma and West Virginia. Educators have justly made their appeal to lawmakers for pay improvements. The headline-grabbing action followed dramatic funding cuts in investments in schools, students and teachers at the same time that state lawmakers put in place tax breaks that mostly benefit top income earners and corporations.

According to [National Education Association](#) research, the average public school teacher salary in the U.S. for 2016-2017 was \$59,660, ranging from a state average high of \$81,902 in New York to \$45,555 in West Virginia. The average classroom teacher salary for 2017-2018 was only estimated to increase 1.4 percent over 2016-2017. But factoring in inflation, the average classroom teacher salary has actually decreased by 4 percent since the 2008-2009 school year. As the United States economy crawls out of the Great Recession, unemployment dips to historic lows and the U.S. stock market stretches to new highs, the decrease in teacher pay relative to inflation represents a major backward step for educators.

As a social justice and equity organization, NAME knows the teacher pay backsliding is shameful and intolerable.

NAME is intimately aware that teachers bear a huge responsibility in educating young people from preschool through college. Companies depend on the unsung efforts of teachers for future workers. Our democracy and government rest on an educated and informed citizenry. Teachers each day of class help to forge that foundation. That is no small feat, considering that there are more than 49,878,710 public school students and more than 3,116,550 teachers in the U.S.

Yet a May 7, 2018, [Business Insider](#) article cites OECD ([Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#)) data, showing that the United States ranks fifth behind top ranked Luxembourg, Switzerland, South Korea and Germany in how much elementary school teachers get paid. The U.S. drops to seventh behind top ranked Luxembourg, Switzerland, Germany, South Korea, Austria and the Netherlands in how much high school teachers get paid.

The [Economic Policy Institute](#) additionally reports that accounting for inflation, teacher pay in the United States actually fell \$30 a week from 1996 to 2015 compared with pay for other college graduates increasing \$124 a week. It should surprise no one that teachers demanding action walked out of classes to protest the public's unwillingness to provide them with pay equity. Keep in mind that teachers constantly come out of their own pockets to provide needed supplies for their classrooms that school districts just don't fund.

NAME encourages states and local jurisdictions to begin this school year to make schoolteachers' salaries equitable with other professions and the top performing Western nations. It will help with teacher retention and go a long way to ensure that educators do a better job preparing students for college and careers, to be lifelong learners and good citizens.