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Nation's Largest Teachers' Union Embraces 'Fundamental Right to Abortion'

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An imaging table at the Reproductive Health Services of Planned Parenthood St. Louis Region in St. Louis, Miss., May 28, 2019. (*Lawrence Bryant/Reuters*)

Over the weekend, the National Education Association adopted a new “business item” declaring its support for “the fundamental right to abortion under *Roe v. Wade*.” The NEA is the most influential teachers’ union in the United States, and with more than three million members is also the nation’s largest labor union of any kind.

The NEA will honor the leadership of women, non-binary, and trans people, and other survivors who have come forward to publicly name their rapists and attackers in the growing, international, #MeToo movement.

Furthermore, the NEA will include an assertion of our defense of a person’s right to control their own body, especially for women, youth, and sexually marginalized people. The NEA vigorously opposes all attacks on the right to choose and stands on the fundamental right to abortion under *Roe v. Wade*.

The statement goes on to assert that this new stance is necessary because “the most misogynistic forces, under Trump, want to abolish the gains of the women’s right movement.” The NEA’s change in rhetoric on abortion is a departure from several decades of couching its stance in terms of “reproductive freedom.”

In [a document](#) that aims to debunk the claims of its critics, the group once called the assertion “NEA supports abortion” a “deception,” and stated that it “does not have a pro-abortion policy.” Here’s more from that document:

[The NEA’s] stance on this issue is often misinterpreted and misunderstood. NEA’s policy statement reads: “The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom.” What this means is that NEA supports the current protections guaranteed under the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision. This decision allows women to decide for themselves if they should have children—or not have children—and protects the constitutional rights of all women, whether they are pro-choice or anti-abortion.

Though in practice such a mindset would likely lead to supporting nearly unlimited abortion rights, this weekend’s sudden change in rhetoric indicates a desire to explicitly redefine abortion on demand as a fundamental right. Even more interesting is the fact that the NEA — a teachers’ union that ostensibly has no obvious reason to care about abortion policy or advocacy — evidently feels pressure to adopt a more radical stance as the Left becomes more dogmatic on the issue.

The statement outlining Business Item 56 doesn’t even make an attempt to articulate why the NEA has a stake in the abortion debate at all. It merely takes for granted that, as an influential left-wing organization, the group must necessarily champion the entire progressive agenda. This is a growing tendency on the Left, as “intersectional” thinking takes hold — the idea that each interest group within the broader progressive movement has a responsibility to embrace and advocate the particular interests of the rest.

If the National Rifle Association were to suddenly issue a statement declaring its belief that life begins at conception, and every human being has the right to life, it would be a cause for confusion and surely for immense criticism from the group’s opponents. But on the Left, such “allyship” among progressive interests is increasingly required as a measure of devotion to the greater cause.

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