



November 10, 2011

Victory for Unions and Higher Ed

A statement by Cary Nelson, AAUP president, and Howard Bunsis, chair of the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress.

Yesterday marked a historic and inspiring victory for the labor movement and for those of us who work in higher education—especially for Ohio faculty, but also for faculty in the nation as a whole.

That's because yesterday, voters in Ohio resoundingly repealed—by a margin of 61 percent to 39 percent—antiunion legislation that would have severely restricted the collective bargaining rights of Ohio public-sector workers. The legislation singled out faculty, making most full-time faculty ineligible to participate in unions by declaring them to be "managers."

Ohio voters realized that budgets cannot be balanced, nor can the economy be improved, by stripping workers of their rights. This country's financial problems do not stem from overpaid firefighters, librarians, and faculty, but from economic policies that encourage the rich to get richer while undercutting basic services for all.

Of course, challenges remain. Part-time faculty in Ohio have long been barred by state law from unionizing, and in the United States, more than half of faculty positions are now part time and seventy percent are non-tenure track. Antiunion legislation is pending in several other states. And higher education as a whole is threatened on many fronts. Public funding is inadequate and privatization is on the agenda in several places. Students and their families have to incur onerous debt burdens in order to obtain a college degree, and many students have seen the doors of college close on them. The fight for broad access to quality higher education and for the faculty voice in decision making will continue.

But today, we pause and extend hearty congratulations to our members and allies on a campaign well fought. Alongside members of other unions, Ohio AAUP members gathered signatures, held informational events, and helped get out the vote. Many who had not been habitual activists were galvanized by the severity of the threat. AAUP chapters, staff, and individual members from across the country also pitched in with labor and with donations. As a whole, the AAUP was able to contribute nearly \$700,000 to the We Are Ohio campaign, which spearheaded the repeal effort. This is an astonishing sum for an organization of our size. We are very proud of the efforts of our members.

