



# Louisiana Federation of Teachers

## American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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February 8, 2010

Governor Bobby Jindal  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Jindal:

As president of the largest teacher and school employee organization in Louisiana, I read the recent release from the Office of the Governor announcing legislation entitled the "Red Tape Reduction Act" with great interest and considerable concern.

The first paragraph clearly asserts that *"educators spend an inordinate amount of time filling out paperwork, writing reports, and navigating through the bureaucratic maze of regulations and red tape."* Sadly, however, nothing in the proposal would reduce paperwork for classroom teachers. Nothing would provide these front-line educators with greater autonomy or more professional discretion.

The "Red Tape Reduction Act (RTRA)" therefore appears to be no more than the latest in the long history of "top-down" reform measures that have failed to recognize the expertise, voice, and value of classroom educators.

The RTRA simply rearranges what constitutes the "Top" and "Middle" on the decision-making ladder. Teachers, *classroom educators*, remain on the bottom rung. Perhaps, this is why the release does not include a single comment of support from any individual representing classroom educators.

Indeed, the document seems to reflect a predilection for "reforms" that spring more from ideology than from research-driven policy. The bullets provided as examples of regulations from which "districts and schools might seek waivers" bear out this suspicion.

The press release suggests tenure, the teacher salary schedule, performance based pay, teacher certification, and pupil-teacher ratios as examples of waivers that could be sought. None of these have been identified by teachers as impediments to student achievement. Each carries with it a highly charged debate replete with "evidence" on all sides, and virtually guarantees a debate that will further polarize parties that need to be at the table.

As you know, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers fully engaged in the creation of Louisiana's Race to the Top application, despite our disagreement with certain details and our strongly held beliefs on a number of reform topics.

We came to the table because we firmly believed that for many of our state's poorest children the need was simply too great to do otherwise. We stayed at the table because of a consensus apparently shared by all parties that the reforms outlined in the application were "organic" and not driven by politics or dogma.

In light of those deliberations, we were hopeful that the coming legislative session would be more collaborative and less contentious. That hope is not reflected in the proposals outlined in the so-called Red Tape Reduction Act.

On behalf of over 20,000 members of the LFT, I urge you to embrace the philosophy that marked our R2T discussions. Reform must be an organic process. With R2T, we seemed to be on a journey of discovery, and we seemed to agree that discovery had to be open to the possibility that one party or the other might be wrong.

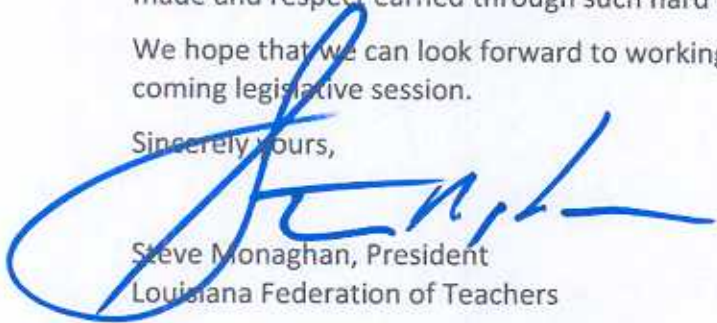
For instance, in regard to tenure, we can find ways to increase respect for and value in tenure as the "meaningful and active process" described in the application. We can also have an honest discussion of R2T's "learning environment index" to provide teachers with the power to identify impediments to student achievement at the site level and to trigger corrective action.

With regard to performance based pay, we can debate ways to reward teachers for excellence or for additional contributions without appearing to attack teacher salary schedules. The gains our teachers have made toward earning nationally competitive salaries are already in jeopardy.

Our recent experience with Superintendent Pastorek and his team in the creation of the state's R2T application suggested that engagement is far better than disengagement. Progress can be made and respect earned through such hard work for common purpose.

We hope that we can look forward to working with you in the interest of our children in the coming legislative session.

Sincerely yours,



Steve Monaghan, President  
Louisiana Federation of Teachers

cc: Senator Ben Nevers, Chair – Senate Education Committee  
Representative Austin Badon, Chair – House Education Committee  
Superintendent Paul Pastorek, LA State Superintendent of Education  
Louisiana Federation of Teachers Executive Board