

# Teacher delegates at head of class

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WASHINGTON—Thirty-two-year-old Rosalie Spaulding, an Auburn, Maine, kindergarten teacher, is a delegate to the Aug. 11 Democratic Convention in New York. She is one of six teachers in the 43-person Maine delegation.

"I think it's very important that teachers become involved in politics," she said.

"We're teaching children to be leaders, and I think some of us ought to start speaking as leaders, ourselves."

Spaulding is one of 302 Carter delegates and 162 alternates nationwide who are teachers.

Accounting for one-seventh of all Carter delegates, teachers are the largest special-interest bloc at the convention. The National Education Association, the nation's second-largest union (after the Teamsters), is represented by members in every state delegation, except West Virginia and Washington, D.C. The NEA has 1.8 million members in every voting district in the United States.

"We are successful because no other union has a grass-roots structure like us," said Kenneth Melley, NEA political director. "One thing teachers do OK is make rules, implement rules, and follow rules."

The goal of the NEA and its members, the teachers, is to reelect the Carter-Mondale ticket. They also intend to push for "pro-education" legislation and pro-

grams, most of which will benefit teachers financially, improve their working environment and create more jobs among their ranks.

Before the primaries, the NEA began to organize its forces for Carter, the candidate who gave them a new federal Department of Education. It poured more than \$3 million into its political effort, which includes congressional races.

Teachers worked for months, holding training sessions, setting up phone banks, and sending pro-Carter mailings in an effort to get people to the caucus meetings in Iowa in January. Iowa teachers were instrumental in aiding Carter in his first campaign test against Sen. Edward Kennedy. Teachers in other states followed suit.

Although almost a half-million of its members are registered Republicans, the NEA, like other unions, had no impact at the Republican Convention.

"The whole Republican Convention was a disappointment," says Melley. Because of the GOP rules, the teachers were not given an opportunity to testify before the platform committee.

At the Democratic Convention, the NEA has taken advantage of rule changes to gain political influence. Male delegates at the Republican Convention outnumbered female delegates. That won't happen at the Democratic Convention, since its rules call for equal division.

"That plays into our hands," says Melley. Sixty percent of the NEA's membership is female—the highest proportion of any union.

The NEA's rival teachers' union, the 568,000-member American Federation of Teachers, is not pleased with the number of delegates the NEA has turned out. Its president, Albert Shanker, decided that the union would support Kennedy for president.

The AFT, which has 81 delegates and alternates, hopes that a vote will occur to open up the rules binding delegates, according to spokesman Phyllis Franck.

Although the Carter-Mondale ticket has support from labor

across the board, the NEA has a more even distribution than other unions—about 6,000 teachers in every congressional district across the country.

"That large block of delegates will play a pivotal role on any close votes of rules or platform, because they'll be organized. The Carter forces are counting on them to stand firm," says Les Francis, a former NEA organizer and now executive director of the Democratic National Committee.

It was only four years ago that the NEA first endorsed a presidential candidate—Carter—and sent 265 delegates to the 1976 Democratic Convention.