

DEMOCRATS

for EDUCATION REFORM

1541 Wilshire Blvd Suite 516
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 989 0630

August 7, 2011

Randi Weingarten
President, American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Weingarten:

Undoubtedly, I am sure you are aware that I authored our nation's first Parent Trigger law. Since its enactment in California, the Parent Trigger law has galvanized parents across America who understand that they are the architects of their children's future. From Compton to Connecticut, they have understood that *the* civil rights issue of our time is education and, they have demonstrated a profound *animo* and *ganas* in fighting for greater educational opportunities for their children.

I am so very proud of this legacy. I was inspired to write the law because what I witnessed unfolding on the streets of Los Angeles; mothers and fathers exhibiting the courage to stand up to all-too-complacent boards and bureaucracies in light of data that showed a persistent and pernicious Achievement Gap in California. Rather than fear parents, I heard their cry-much like that which resembled the dreams that my mother held for me: to access education, and by so doing, to harness the American Dream. My mother had a sixth grade education. I have a PhD. Her advocacy was the key to my success, and the mothers with whom I have met understand. They have marched and further underscore for me that if we expect parents to be responsible, then we must simultaneously grant them rights. Not lip service; not "involvement" like showing up at a bake sale; but *real* rights to truly become partners in turning around the lowest performing schools in our nation.

This is why the Parent Trigger law was written, passed by a majority of both houses of our state legislature, and signed into law. This is why the Parent Trigger has become such a symbol of empowerment –because for the first time parents find themselves with real power; a power equal to that of all the powerful interests which collectively have directed education policy in this nation for decades.

Obviously, I was disappointed that there was such intense opposition by teachers' unions in California to the original Parent Trigger bill. But I was stunned when I read the reports of AFT's efforts to suppress and kill the Parent Trigger in Connecticut. Hence, with a great sense of urgency, I write to you today to request a meeting with you personally in order to discuss AFT's actions in Connecticut. I noticed in the Power Point presentation on "Kill Parent Trigger" that I was singled out in your "lesson plan". Well, President Weingarten, I am requesting to see the lesson plan that was attached to my name. I am requesting a full presentation of exactly what was taught about me.


President Weingarten, I don't know if you remember, but I, too, am a union member! I, too, *continue* to pay my dues to my teacher's union and am officially affiliated with AFT and NEA. Hence, as an affiliated AFT member I think it is only respectful for me to be shown and presented with the information in AFT's "kill the bill" strategy that pertained to me. After all, I am singled out in your report. What was "taught" about me? I want to see the "lesson plan".

Furthermore, I am requesting that you make public all other Power Points that were developed to train AFT members on how to disable and kill parent empowerment legislation that were used in subsequent states where Parent Trigger legislation was introduced. To my count, there have been at least thirteen other states. I ask that you make these public as well.

Finally, I understand that you have distanced yourself from the production of these documents since their disclosure. That is good, since this is a shameful, embarrassing document. However, distancing yourself is not enough. This type of "lesson plan" and strategies are offensive and dismissive to the very individuals who should be fully respected for their goals to further the educational opportunities of their very own children: the parents. I believe you need to go one step further and offer an immediate apology and a commitment to never let something like this happen again.

I appreciate your prompt response to my letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gloria Romero". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Gloria Romero (Ret.)
California Director
Democrats for Education Reform