



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII
PROFESSIONAL ASSEMBLY

An Open Letter to the National Education Association in Washington, D.C.

May 31, 2013

Mr. Dennis Van Roekel
President
National Education Association (NEA)

Dear Mr. Van Roekel:

We'd like to thank you for trying to destroy our union.

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) is a small union here in Hawaii. We have nearly 4,000 members who are the faculty of the University of Hawaii. In contrast, NEA, based in Washington, D.C., has three million members.

You threatened to destroy us ("decertify" is the technical term) when you visited last June if we ceased our relationship with NEA. Despite this, in February we voted to disaffiliate from NEA. We concluded NEA focuses on teachers, not professors; we weren't getting good benefit for the money we send you, without even being full members of NEA. And we just didn't think your suggestion that D.C. types lobbying on our behalf would go over well with our state legislature.

Our members have been bombarded with visits by your staff from the Mainland since our vote. Our members have also been deluged with calls from phone banks of Mainland volunteers and letters from you and posters plastered on campus, asking UHPA members to demand reconsideration. Please keep at it.

We welcome NEA staff as union tourists since the university is supported by our local economy. Stay at our hotels, eat in our restaurants, and rent our cars. Just remember to tip well. When you are not busy, go to the North Shore, visit our national parks at Haleakala and Volcano and the U.S.S. Arizona. And there are always our beaches.

Maybe learn some local history, such as how 120 years ago other folks from Washington who thought they had good intentions helped overthrow the monarchy at Iolani Palace. Since you are using the dues we sent to Washington, it's good to see the money coming back. We are, however, disappointed that you have been sending your mass mailings out from D.C. You could have printed and mailed them here on the Islands, helping our economy and thus helping the university.

We realize you need our \$686,649 in annual dues because your membership is dropping. NEA has been reorganizing and laying off staff. Your clout must be slipping. President Obama sent Joe Biden, his Vice President, to your annual meeting last year. I guess if you want to see Obama, you'll have to come out here to Hawaii and wait in line with him for shave ice (it's a local thing).

With a strong six-year contract in place, we tend to forget that UHPA leaders negotiated the contract **without** NEA help, and that 89% of our members stood up to the university administration when it thought we would cave in to a weak offer.

I must express my disappointment with your claim "With the recent loss of Hawaii's longtime friend of public education, Senator Daniel Inouye, UHPA needs the support and resources of its national union more than ever." Mr. Van Roekel, I am sure you are a good man, but you are not Senator Inouye. The people of Hawaii mourn his loss, even as we all move forward; however, the NEA is no stand-in for our late Senator.

Finally, we continue our offer to collaborate with NEA in advocating for public higher education. If you need help on this, we have some really sharp staff, a few of whom we hired away from NEA affiliates.

With aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cameron Duffy".

David Duffy, Ph.D.
President, UHPA