

## OFT, YOUR UNION: THE REPRESENTATION, VOICE AND BENEFITS YOU NEED

**Q: Can you tell me what happened over spring break to our union and our right to collectively bargain with the Department of Defense Education Activity?**

**A: On March 27, President Trump issued an executive order (EO) eliminating collective bargaining rights for us and over a million other federal employees.**

The reason given was that our work as classroom teachers directly impacts the national security of the United States, and, therefore, we cannot bargain over our working conditions.

**Q: Are federal unions challenging this EO?**

**A: Yes!** The Overseas Federation of Teachers—along with our national union, the AFT, and other federal sector unions—believes it is an illegal attack on our rights as federal employees and American citizens. We are coordinating closely with other federal sector unions on legal efforts to have it reversed.

**Q: So, do we still have a union or not?**

**A: Yes.** Unquestionably and unequivocally! At its core, a union is a free association of people who stand united to advocate on shared issues. We will always have a union for as long as we continue to want it—and sustain it—and the government is strictly forbidden by the First Amendment from taking action to restrict our right to join together to speak as one united voice about the issues that matter to us.

**Q: If we no longer have a contract, can OFT continue to represent me if DoDEA attempts to discipline me for poor performance or misconduct?**

**A: Yes.** Federal law and government regulations require DoDEA to permit employees to be represented, if they so choose, in cases where formal discipline has been proposed. OFT is still the best choice for representation for members facing discipline. Our union brings unmatched experience and legal expertise to defending your rights and your job.

Representation for employees in investigatory meetings that occur prior to the formal proposal of discipline isn't guaranteed by law. But OFT members can request union representation in such meetings, and if it's permitted, an OFT representative will be there for you. And at any time in the disciplinary process, or even if you're simply worried you could be disciplined, you can reach out to your LUR for assistance and counseling.

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**Q: If I'm not a member, is OFT still required to represent me if I'm disciplined or fired?**

**A:** Following the recent executive order ending collective bargaining, **only active members will now have access to union representation by OFT's experienced staff and legal experts.** Before the recent EO, unions were required to represent both members and nonmembers in matters related to discipline or termination. But that's not the case anymore.

**Q: Can the union still help me with problems and issues on the job?**

**A: Yes, definitely.** Your OFT officers and LURs can still assist you when problems and issues come up at work, from payroll issues to debt letters to RAT concerns. We know DoDEA inside out: its structure, its processes, its systems. We have good relationships with DoDEA managers at every level. We'll know how to get problems fixed and snarls untangled, and we'll still be there to do that for you.

**Q: Can our union still speak up for what our students need and for quality education at DoDEA schools?**

**A: Yes!** Through our union, we've always advocated—in our schools, on base, with DoDEA management—for what our students need. The end of collective bargaining won't end this advocacy. We'll just find new ways to do it, such as working within our SACs and reaching out to parent groups. OFT wants what's good for kids and fair to teachers. Together, we have the strength and voice to promote the safe, welcoming, top-quality schools our students deserve.

**Q: Will I still get the same membership benefits through our national union that I have now?**

**A: Yes.** OFT membership still comes with a wide range of terrific benefits through our national union, the 1.8 million-member AFT. These include professional liability coverage (up to \$1 million of occupational liability insurance); trauma counseling (a free, 21-session, confidential benefit for members who qualify); union scholarships and AFT-exclusive family discounts, financial aid and grants for college; two programs for simplifying and managing student loan debt; and special travel and entertainment savings (on everything from car rentals and hotels, to discounts to theme parks and movies).

**STANDING ALONE IS LONELY.**

**STANDING TOGETHER, WE'RE STRONG!**

