



The NEA Education Support Professionals Bill of Rights

What is the NEA Education Support Professionals (ESP) BOR?

In response to advocacy from ESPs on NEA's board of directors and at the direction of NEA President, Becky Pringle, the NEA ESP Bill of Rights was created after the success of ESP-specific strategic campaigns in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Illinois. The priority topics of the NEA Bill of Rights were identified with input from ESPs nationwide and the NEA Board of Directors ESP Careers Committee.

There are 10 priority topics named in the NEA ESP Bill of Rights:

- Fair Compensation
- Recognition and Respect
- Safe and Healthy Work Environment
- Affordable Healthcare
- Paid Leave
- Professional Learning and Career Advancement
- Workload and Staffing
- Retirement
- Protection from Privatization
- Right to Bargain

What is the purpose of NEA's ESP Bill of Rights?

The NEA Education Support Professionals Bill of Rights is an articulation of the most important needs of ESPs as identified by a national sampling of ESPs. Having these needs packaged and branded under the NEA ESP Bill of Rights helps NEA and its affiliates pursue policies, programs, and partnerships that help meet these needs. NEA's ESP Bill of Rights is the charge given to this union by its members on where to focus its energy and resources.

The NEA Bill of Rights is supported by a campaign to get individuals and affiliates to sign-on and endorse the NEA ESP Bill of Rights, thereby giving the document greater weight and credibility. Each endorsement is also a commitment to advocate for these ESP needs. An important part of the campaign is encouraging/prompting state and local affiliates to create *their own* ESP Bill of Rights.

Why not just use the NEA ESP Bill of Rights?

The creation of any ESP Bill of Rights should reflect the voice and interests of the ESPs it represents. **A foundational component of an ESP Bill of Rights is a commitment to conversations and other strategies to engage as many ESPs as possible to assure *their* voice is reflected in *their* Bill of Rights.** Simply adapting someone else's Bill of Rights, even if you are certain the topics will be the same, skips that very important step and shortcuts ownership and engagement. Any affiliate interested in creating their own ESP Bill of Rights is welcome to use NEA's ESP Bill of Rights as the starting point for a conversation with ESPs.

The ESP Bill of Rights should be used as an organizing tool to:

- Make a positive impact for ESPs – Win! Win! Win!
- Position the union and the power of the collective as a force for positive change for ESPs and, in doing so, attract new members and engage/activate existing ones
- Foster collaboration and relationship building by engaging ALL members, regardless of membership type, in supporting ESPs
 - It is important to have the support and engagement of certified staff, local and state union leaders, and other unions in the local, region, and state
- Create a bargaining and policy framework to address issues outlined in state and local ESP Bill of Rights
- Engage the community, decision makers and elected officials to increase awareness, advocacy, and solutions for issues impacting ESPs

How is NEA's ESP Bill of Rights different from the *Bill of Rights for Paraprofessionals and Education Support Staff*, the resolution introduced in November 2023 by U.S. Senator Markey?

NEA is grateful to Senator Markey for introducing his resolution. As a resolution, what he has proposed is not law (so no funding or accountability), but rather is an expression/message of collective sentiment/support of a group of people (in this case, Congress). The resolution has not yet been adopted, but work continues to secure the votes needed to pass. Despite it not being law, Senator Markey's Bill of Rights does a great deal to raise awareness and move support for ESPs in Congress and can do even more when/if passed. Awareness is foundationally important to build from when legislation is proposed, for awareness can allow for smarter ESP inclusion and greater ESP benefit.

Senator Markey's resolution is NOT in competition with the NEA ESP Bill of Rights, rather they complement each other by raising awareness and carving multiple paths to support ESPs. Support from members for both is crucial and will benefit ESPs.

How do I start an ESP Bill of Rights campaign in my own state or local affiliate?

As part of NEA's strategic campaign to scale impact for ESPs through its Bill of Rights, NEA has started compiling a variety of resources, including prerecorded webinars from Massachusetts, Maryland, and Illinois, explaining in detail how to begin a campaign. These webinars are an invaluable resource! We are also in the midst of compiling additional resources, including sample bargaining language, legislation, branding, advocacy collateral, etc. We will make these available in the coming months.

Where do I get support?

In your affiliate: Speak with your local, and/or state leadership, your Uniserv Director, or your state staff ESP Coordinator.

At NEA: Contact us at ESPBOR@nea.org

From other members: If you're at the NEA ESP National Conference, consider attending workshops 30 and/or 23. If you're unable to, then reach out to the workshop presenters to learn more about their experience.

Are resources available?

Please visit nea.org/espbillofrights