

WHERE DO YOUR UNION DUES GO?

A LOOK AT THE TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (TEA) SPENDING IN THE 2021 FISCAL YEAR



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The **Tennessee Education Association (TEA)** is the largest teachers union in Tennessee, representing over 40,000 teachers in the state. The TEA is associated with the National Education Association (NEA), which represents 2.8 million members nationwide. As a nonprofit organization, the TEA must file a Form 990 financial disclosure with the IRS. This filing reveals that the union spends most of its money sustaining itself rather than supporting its membership.

Salaries, benefits, and other personnel costs for the TEA's 55 employees accounted for approximately 67% of total expenses in 2021. The union's top earning employee, Executive Director Terrance Gibson, made \$196,787 in 2021.

The average salary for a Tennessee public school teacher is \$52,343, meaning one union employee earned as much as nearly four TEA members.

Outside of compensation and benefits for its employees, the TEA spent about \$637,000 on

travel, \$609,000 on legal fees, and about \$300,000 on office expenses. Notably, the union did not spend any money on "benefits paid to or for members." However, the TEA did spend \$193,000 on "TEA Member Publication," likely a newsletter for members.

In 2021, the TEA brought in \$9.03 million in revenue, with 79% of this coming from membership dues. In 2019 and 2020, membership dues accounted for between 76 and 78% of the TEA's revenue. Other sources of revenue for the TEA include investments (\$244,550) and rent (\$328,383).

As of the 2021 reporting period, the TEA is in a strong financial position. The union holds \$2.9 million more assets than liabilities. Most of the TEA's assets are held in cash and publicly traded securities. Most of the union's \$5.9 million liabilities are held in accounts payable (\$3.9 million).



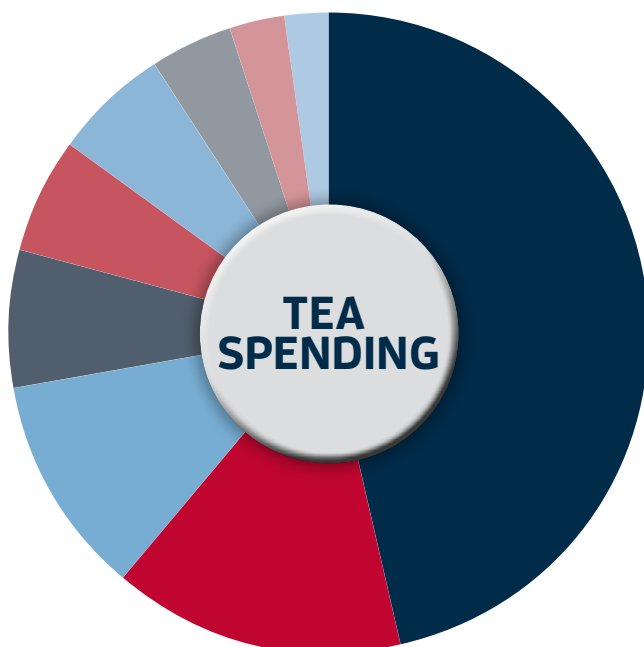
TEA Executive Director paid

4X

more than average teacher salary



TEA SPENDING 2021



- 47% : COMPENSATION
- 15% : OPERATIONAL EXPENSES
- 11% : EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
- 7% : TRAVEL
- 6% : LEGAL FEES
- 6% : PENSION PLAN
- 4% : PAYROLL TAXES
- 3% : OTHER
- 2% : TEA MEMBER PUBLICATION
- 0% : BENEFITS PAID TO/FOR MEMBERS

TEA POLITICAL SPENDING

The TEA did not report any spending on politics or lobbying on its Form 990. However, this doesn't mean the union isn't involved in politics. **The TEA's website hosts an entire political advocacy section.** The website includes pages on



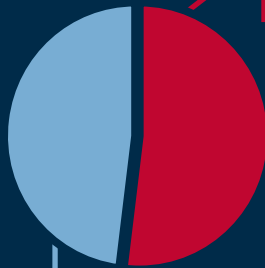
the Tennessee General Assembly, local legislative advocacy, and the Tennessee State Board of Education. Additionally, the website has an **entire page dedicated to pressuring members into supporting the TEA and NEA's political agenda.**

Though not reported on the union's Form 990, the TEA engages in lobbying. **Since 2011, the TEA has spent between \$2 million and \$3.5 million on lobbying in Tennessee alone.** The TEA also operates a 527 organization, the Tennessee Education Association Fund for Children and Public Education (TEA FCPE). As a 527 organization, the TEA FCPE can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on politics.

From 2019 to 2021, the TEA FCPE spent \$511,808 on politics. Of this, \$165,100 went to Democratic candidates, \$179,470 went to Republicans, and \$167,237 went toward administrative costs and nonpartisan causes.

POLITICAL SPENDING 2019-2021

\$179,470 to Republicans



\$165,100 to Democrats

LOBBYING SPENDING

\$2M TO \$3.5M



spent on lobbying since 2011

Tennessee Education Association members also pay dues to the National Education Association (NEA). For more information on how those dues are spent, see the link below:

[NEA: Where do your union dues go?](#)

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