

WHERE DO YOUR UNION DUES GO?

A LOOK AT COLORADO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (CEA) IN 2019



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The **Colorado Education Association (CEA)** represents over 39,000 teachers throughout the state of Colorado. The CEA is associated with the National Education Association (NEA), a union that represents over three million members across all 50 states. As a nonprofit organization, the CEA must file a Form 990 financial disclosure with the IRS. The latest available filing covers the union's 2019 fiscal year.

In total, about 80% of the CEA's spending went toward running the union. The union spent about \$1.3 million on UniServ expenses and provided \$1.19 million in grants to local affiliates, about 20% of total expenditures. These two expenses were the extent of the CEA's membership support during 2019.

As of 2019, the CEA held about \$6.8 million in cash, \$2.5 million in accounts receivable, and \$2.2 million in land, buildings, and real estate. In total, the CEA holds over \$13 million in assets. The union holds about \$3.4 million in liabilities, almost all of which are classified as accounts payable and accrued expenses.

In 2019, the CEA brought in \$15.3 million in revenue, with 78% of this coming from membership dues. From 2017 to 2019, membership dues accounted for between 78 and

87% of the CEA's revenue. Most of the remaining revenue came from contributions and grants, a total of \$2.3 million. Since 2017, the CEA's annual revenue increased by \$2.8 million.

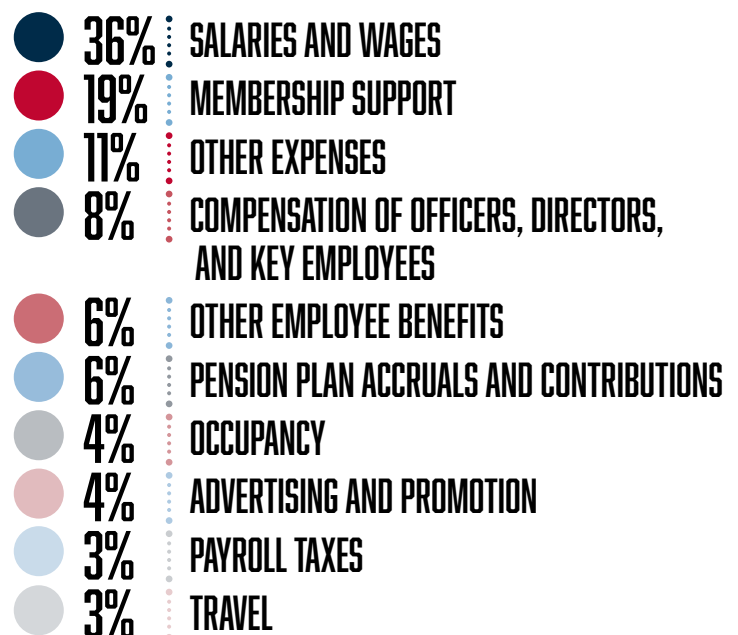
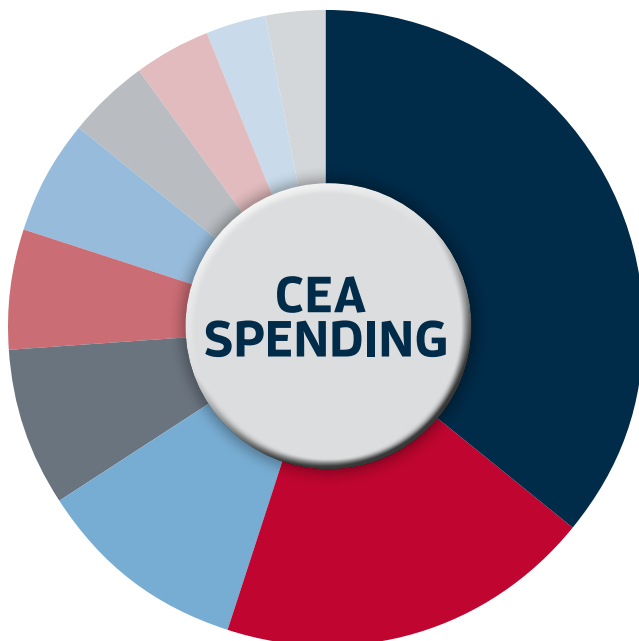
While revenue quickly increased, expenses increased at a lesser pace. From 2017 to 2019, the CEA's expenses increased by roughly \$450,000. In turn, **the union's net financial position increased by more than \$3.5 million over the three-year span, including a \$2.6 million jump in 2019.**

Union employee salaries and benefits were the largest expense category, accounting for over half of all expenses in each year from 2017 to 2019. In 2019, employee salaries and benefits alone accounted for 58% of the union's expenditures. That year, Deputy Executive Directors Katherine Michienzi-Rendon and Suzanne Zimmer made \$223,350 and \$221,905 respectively, about **four times the average salary for a public school teacher in Colorado.**

Outside of compensation and benefits for its employees, the CEA spent \$558,000 on occupancy expenses, \$485,000 on advertising, and \$383,000 on travel.



CEA SPENDING 2019



CEA POLITICAL SPENDING

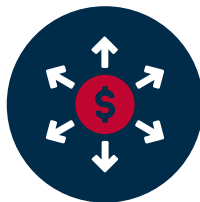
On Schedule C of the 2019 Form 990, the CEA reported spending \$37,765 on political activities. The union spent \$40,000 in 2018 and a mere \$6,000 in 2017. However, this is not an accurate representation of the CEA's political activity. The union operates a 527 organization, the Colorado Fund for Children and Public Education. **From 2017 to 2019, the union's 527 spent \$1,974,274 on politics.**

527 organizations can raise unlimited funds and are generally organized in support of a certain candidate, policy position, or election. Colorado's TRACER online campaign finance database reveals that the CEA's 527 organization bankrolls numerous left-wing political organizations in Colorado. **Below are some examples of gifts from the Colorado Fund for Children and Public Education:**

- \$391,150** to Teachers for Kennedy, an independent expenditure committee (IEC) that supported Cary Kennedy in her 2018 gubernatorial campaign. Kennedy lost to Jared Polis in the Democratic primary.
- \$300,000** to Good Jobs Colorado, an IEC dedicated to supporting Democrats and opposing Republicans in the 2018 gubernatorial election.
- \$227,500** to Coloradans for Fairness, another IEC dedicated to supporting Democrats and opposing Republicans.
- \$210,500** to Our Colorado Values, an IEC that supports Democrats and opposes Republicans running for the Colorado State House of Representatives.
- \$198,420** to Great Schools Thriving Communities, a political organization that supported 2018 Amendment 73, which sought to increase taxes and funding for public schools. The amendment was rejected by voters.

- \$176,911** to Every Student Succeeds and \$125,000 to Students Deserve Better, IECs aimed at electing pro-public education school board members throughout Colorado.
- \$100,000** to Democracy First Colorado, which works to oppose recall elections for Democratic elected officials in Colorado.
- \$100,000** to Coloradans for Prosperity, an organization that supported propositions CC and DD in 2019. Both propositions would have raised taxes for Coloradans.
- \$40,000** to Educators for Equity, which supports ballot measures that would increase funding for public schools.
- \$15,000** to Our Community Supporting Our Educators, an organization that supports pro-public education candidates.
- \$15,000** to Douglas Schools for Douglas Kids, which supports candidates for Douglas School Board.
- \$10,000** to Citizens for School District 51, which supports a bond and mill levy for Mesa County Valley School District 51.

Notably, six of these 13 organizations (Teachers for Kennedy, Coloradans for Fairness, Our Colorado Values, Democracy First Colorado, Coloradans for Prosperity, and Educators for Equity) have the same registered agent: Ashley Stevens. **Stevens is**



infamous for operating numerous dark money organizations in Colorado. In total, the Colorado Fund for Children and Education gave \$1,069,150, or 54% of the organization's total political spending, run by Stevens.

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

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

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