

# WHERE DO YOUR UNION DUES GO?

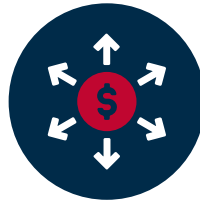
## A LOOK AT COLORADO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (CEA) IN 2020



AMERICANS FOR FAIR TREATMENT

The Colorado Education Association (CEA) represents almost 40,000 teachers in the state of Colorado. CEA is associated with the National Education Association (NEA), a national union that represents 2.8 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 2020 fiscal year.

In total, about 60 percent of CEA's spending went toward staff costs. The union spent about \$7.6 million on compensation and benefits for its executives and employees. Executive Director Katherine Michienzi-Rendon was the highest earning employee in 2020, earning \$233,250 in total compensation. Michienzi-Rendon's salary is roughly four times the salary of the average Colorado public school teacher. Other top expenses for CEA include grants to local affiliates (\$1.5 million), and public relations costs related to the union's strategic objectives (\$1.1 million). **Notably, CEA did not spend any money on benefits for its membership.** From 2017 to 2020, CEA consistently spent less than it took



in. As a result, the union holds a strong financial position, with over \$8.8 million more in assets than liabilities. As of 2020, CEA held about \$7.3 million in cash, \$1.8 million in accounts receivable and \$2 million in land, buildings, and real estate. In total, CEA holds over \$13 million in assets.

The union holds about \$4.6 million in liabilities, almost all of which are classified as accounts payable and accrued expenses. The union's net financial position has improved by more than \$2.6 million since 2017.

**In 2020, CEA brought in \$13.7 million in revenue, with 87 percent of this coming from membership dues.** From 2017 to 2020, membership dues accounted for between 78 and 87 percent of CEA's revenue. Most of the remaining revenue came from contributions and grants from the NEA, a total of \$918,919.

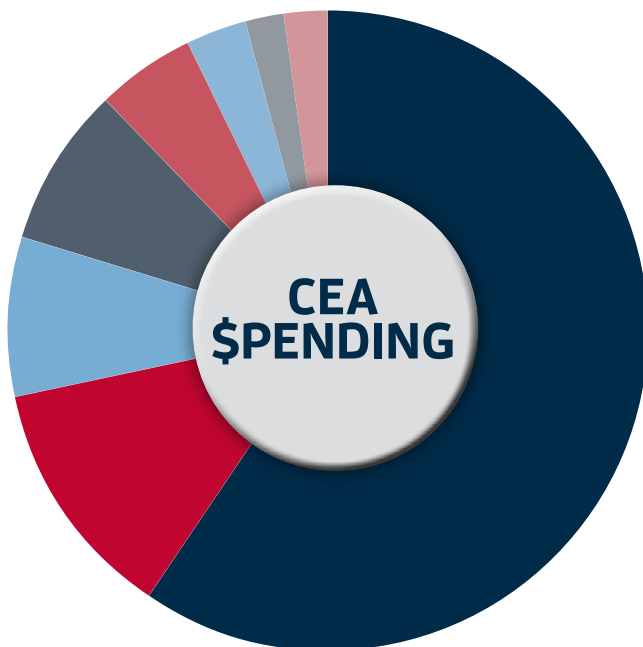


Executive Director earned

**4X**

the average public school teacher

## CEA SPENDING 2020



- 59% STAFF COSTS
- 12% GRANTS TO LOCALS
- 8% PUBLIC RELATIONS
- 8% ALL OTHER EXPENSES
- 5% OCCUPANCY
- 3% ADVERTISING
- 2% TRAVEL
- 2% CONTRACTOR EXPENSES

# CEA POLITICAL SPENDING

On Schedule C of the 2019 Form 990, CEA reported spending \$35,537 on political activities. However, this is not an accurate representation of CEA's political activity. The union operates a 527 organization, the Colorado Fund for Children and Public Education. **During the 2021-22 election cycle, the union's political arm spent over \$1.2 million 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.** Of note, the Colorado Fund for Children and Public Education gave:

**\$259,891** to Students Deserve Better, an independent expenditure committee that supports "pro public education" school board candidates.

**\$250,000** to Colorado Labor Action, an independent expenditure committee that aims to elect pro-union politicians to office.

**\$250,000** to All Together Colorado, which supports Democrats and opposes Republicans running for Colorado State Senate.

**\$200,000** to Better Colorado Alliance, which supports Democrats and opposes Republicans running for Colorado State House.

**\$100,000** to Coloradans for Ballot Transparency, which supported a ballot measure that required that the tax impact on taxpayers of different income levels be disclosed in the ballot language of all future initiated measures that increase or decrease the individual tax rate.

**\$50,000** to Blueflower Action, an organization that seeks to elect progressive, pro-choice Democratic women to public office.

**\$50,000** to Defend Democracy Fund, which supports Democratic candidates for Colorado Secretary of State.

**\$45,000** to Keeping Colorado Great, an organization that fought against a ballot proposition to decrease the state's income tax.



Notably, all but two of these organizations (Students Deserve Better and Coloradans for Ballot Transparency) have the same registered agent: Ashley Stevens. **Stevens is infamous for operating numerous dark money organizations in Colorado.**

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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