



## Tax Dollars are for **Lobbying** <sup>^</sup> Education

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*[UPDATE: A previous version of this article erroneously stated that the NHSBA was in favor of the return of "Evergreen Clauses". The NHSBA in fact opposes "Evergreen Clauses."]*

As Steve MacDonald first discussed [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), the Merrimack School District is sending \$6,092 of your tax dollars annually to the New Hampshire School Board's Association (NHSBA), a registered lobby activity. After the [District administrators admitted](#) that they've been paying those dues for years in a manner that violates [RSA 15:5](#), the Superintendent invited NHSBA Executive Director, Ted Comstock, and NHSBA staff attorney, Barret Christina, down for a little damage control before the School Board.

Mr. Comstock spoke eloquently for fifteen minutes on the [benefits and services](#) provided by NHSBA to its 160+ member districts. He talked about the ever changing landscape of State and Federal laws and the need to have dedicated personnel to advise Districts on how to remain compliant (*apparently the NHSBA missed RSA 15:5's restrictions on dues payments to lobbyists*). He, of course, downplayed NHSBA's lobbying roll by saying it represents "less than 10% of the staff hours." He later went on to say, "actually, it is probably less than 7%." With so little staff time devoted to lobbying, I wonder how NHSBA supports the mandates set out in its "[Policies, Resolutions and Statements of Belief Manual](#)." By my count, at least half of the fifty statements specifically call on NHSBA to lobby the legislature (e.g. "support legislation", "oppose legislation", "urges the legislature", etc.).

Mr. Comstock went on to say that any lobby activity that they partake in is with the full voice of the taxpayers because their elected school board representatives are the people who make up the delegation and the delegation is the body that votes on all resolutions.

Well, I am a taxpayer and I don't feel represented. I am not against charter schools, homeschooling, pension reform and voucher programs, **but the NHSBA is**. I am not for more studies by the U.S. Department of Education, **but the NHSBA is**. In fact, as I read through these resolutions I am left with the distinct impression that they appear to align more with resolutions by the [National American Federation of Teachers' \(AFT\)](#) and the [National Education Association's \(NEA\)](#) than with my own positions. Who is it NHSBA is representing again? Is it my voice they are hearing or is it the unions that care much more about jobs, benefits and funding than they do about educating my children?

I have to hand it to the Superintendent though, the visit did the trick. The School Board lapped it up. They threw a

few softballs Mr. Comstock's way, and then discussed the process for submitting resolutions of their own for the upcoming NHSBA delegate assembly. Pats on the back all around for the school board who all now feel quite satisfied that NHSBA membership is a wise use of the taxpayer funds. That pesky lobbying concern was much ado about nothing.

All things being equal, I'd rather **not** have my tax dollars spent lobbying for or against the causes I believe in. Instead of using a governing body to take your money to support my cause, I'd rather independently choose if/when/where I send funds to lobby the legislature and let you do the same. Why is that so hard for our elected representatives to understand?

**Merrimack should refuse to pay NHSBA dues until it divests itself of all lobby activities.**

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