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Freedom Fund: Senate Should Approve Reforms to Protect Education Funding, Teacher Pension System

Lansing Considers Bills to Prohibit Union Business on Taxpayer Time, End Union Pension Spiking Scheme

LANSING, MI, March 6, 2018 –Michigan Freedom Fund Executive Director Tony Daunt today encouraged members of the Senate Education Committee to approve Senate Bills 795 and 796, legislation sponsored by Sen. Marty Knollenberg to protect education spending by closing loopholes that allow union bosses to conduct union business on classroom time and to raid the teacher pension system.

“The Michigan Education Association has spent decades stealing public education dollars to fund their union business,” said Daunt. “If that weren’t enough, they’ve used loopholes to spike their one-percenter union bosses’ pensions, leaving taxpayers holding the bag. Enough is enough.”

Senate Bill 795 would close a loophole used by former MEA President Steve Cook and other full time union staffers to raid teacher pension funds to bankroll their own retirements.

Cook takes home annual payments of more than \$131,000 from the teacher pension fund, despite having worked the last 25 years as a full-time union employee. His annual take from the taxpayer-funded account went up significantly last year, when before he formally retired the union gave him a \$23,000 raise. The bookkeeping change boosted the union boss’s annual pension by more than \$4,600 more per year, at taxpayer expense.

Cook’s only time in the classroom came decades ago as a part-time paraprofessional.

Senate Bill 796 would finally prohibit union leaders from conducting union business during classroom time at taxpayer expense.

“Senator Knollenberg and the committee chairman, Senator Pavlov, deserve a great deal of credit for sponsoring these bills and giving them a hearing,” said Daunt. “Parents expect state education dollars to be spent educating their kids. These common sense reforms will finally ensure that’s what happens.”

Michigan Freedom Fund is a nonprofit organization run by Michiganders for Michiganders, working to advance, promote, and protect Michigan workers’ Constitutional rights. For more information on the Freedom Fund, please visit www.MichiganFreedomFund.com.

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