

**Vox Pop Interviews with Teachers, Students, Union Members, and Community Members at the
West Virginia Teachers' Strike Rally**

Where: State Capitol grounds

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Location: Charleston, WV

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 11:15

Interview Transcripts of teachers, students, public employees, union members, and community members at the WV state capitol for the WV Teacher Strike

Voices from the West Virginia Teacher Strike 2.26.18

West Virginia State Capitol

UMWA Member Rick Glover

RG: I'm from Kanawha County, my name is Rick Glover. I'm from Cabin Creek--Charleston area. I'm here because I believe in what the teachers want. I think that legislators has showed all disrespect to workers, and it's just not...the teachers now, it's become more dominant with disrespect to workers, and they're extremely pro-business--there's nothing wrong with being business. But they have forgot the people who makes this state and things happen.

EH: Are you a UMWA member?

RG: Yes, I'm a UMWA member. I'm from Local 8843.

EH: That's Kanawha County?

RG: Yes, ma'am. Well you just look how arrogant the senate president is. There's no use for somebody to be that arrogant. With just, you know, just-- and our whole leadership of our state, even on the national level, has forgot about workers. Well yeah, I mean you just look at the leadership of our state. And even on the national level. And labor only asks for a piece of the pie--they're not asking for the whole pie! And you think about the teachers--the money they spend for their education, the things they do for their own--on their own, for our children. Take it on their own. And then they want to cut their healthcare? Well I know now they got it froze, but they want to go by their annual income of the whole family. And then you think about the money that they make, and then all the schooling the have to go through? That's not right. And there's a lot of 'em says--we've been pretty much 50th in wages. And when you look at West Virginia-- just stop and think-- we've got the timber, we've got the natural gas, we got coal, we got water, we got tourism! We could be the Colorado of the East! If it is managed. But it is not and we pay some of the highest taxes. Just think-- I mean people should think about that!

High school students Cecilia and Jenna from Poca High School

C: My name's Cecilia and I am from Putnam County, I go to Poca High School.

J: My name is Jenna and I go to Poca High School.

EH: Could you tell me why you're here today?

C: My mom's a teacher so I'm standing strong with her and I just feel like we should always support our teachers because they're making our future.

J: I'm here because all of my teachers are my biggest supporters and I think we should support them also.

Teacher Emily Eskew from Kanawha County, Marmet elementary (Contacted for permission via LinkedIn)

My name is Emily Eskew and I'm from Kanawha County. I teach 4th grade at Marmet elementary. Basically what this means to me is more about the respect for the profession because here we are 48th paid in the country actually, and there's no incentive to stay here. And as a young educator, that's something that we need to have because we have all these vacancies and nobody wants to say, our legislature doesn't respect us and in turn that makes the public not respect us. And you see all these comments about us being babysitters or we don't do anything, and you know, it's ridiculous because I see so many things good and bad in the classroom, and I just feel like we really need to take a look and reevaluate our perspective on education and how we view it and I feel like it needs to be one of our top priorities because if our kids aren't learning, we have no future. So, that's just my spiel on it.

Kelly Punzalan, Barboursville Middle School Teacher, Cabell County (Permission to use name w/ quote granted)

My name is Kelly Punzalan and I work at Barboursville Middle School in Cabell County. I am here because I'm very concerned about my PEIA benefits and the way that they have increased-- my premiums and my deductibles, and I'm also here because I believe we deserve a higher pay raise.

John Connor, Special Ed Teacher, Pendleton County (Permission to use name w/ quote granted)

My name is John Connor, I'm a Special Education Teacher in Pendleton County. I'm here to lend a voice that can't have a voice on these important issues, especially with regards to the PEIA and the broken funding that's there, the need for a permanent fix on PEIA and absolutely about competitive pay-- I know folks are gonna be hearing that teachers are just asking for more money--it's not that. We've got to get the pay scale in West Virginia competitive so we stop losing our talented teacher pool to our surrounding states.

Andrea Martin, Teacher in Fayette County, Parent in Raleigh County

AM: My name is Andrew Martin and I'm a teacher in Fayette County, a parent in Raleigh County.

EH: And why are you here today?

AM: Trying to get something done about our insurance and our pay. So no... I'm here to try to get something done about the insurance, the insurance and the pay. I would just be happy if my pay increase was enough to cover my premium increase! I'm not asking for much!

Kelli Douglas, Kanawha County, Overbrook Elementary 1st grade teacher (permission granted to use quote w/ name)

KD: Kelli Douglas, Kanawha County, Overbrook Elementary School

EH: What do you teach?

KD: 1st grade.

EH: And could you tell me why you're here today?

KD: Because I feel like... I feel like for a lot of years, West Virginia teachers have been pushed to the side and it's not right. We are with the children of the future for predominantly most of their lives. We care for them, we give them food, we give them shelter, we give them love, and West Virginia has been looking down on us for some reason for trying to care for their children. And I don't think it's fair for us. We deserve more respect, we deserve more fair treatment, and we deserve the love that we give to kids every single day.

Kelle Angle, Spring Hill Elementary Teacher, Cabell County (photo) (permission granted to use name)

KA: My name's Kelle Angle, and I'm from Spring Hill Elementary in Cabell County.

EH: And could you tell me why you're here today?

KA: Well, I am a teacher of 25 years and I am here not just for myself but to support all teachers and state employees. Also my own children-- I have a daughter that's in education that's about to graduate and I know this is going to determine her future, and my son is a type 1 diabetic and we are already eaten up with costs for his supplies and things, so we need a big change with our insurance.

Terry Board, Jackson County Public Employee, Paula Prunty, Laborers Union 1085, Jackson County (photos- women on Kanawha Blvd. with signs, Terry has a hard hat)

EH: Could you tell me your name, county, and school?

TB: I'm not from a school

EH: Oh ok, name and county?

TB: My name's Terry Board, I'm from Jackson County.

EH: And why are you here today?

TB: To support the teachers and also for our PEIA-- I'm a state employee and we don't make very much and if they raise it, I mean I'll literally, if I wasn't married, could apply and get food stamps, because of our pay. But it's also to support my teachers, our teachers, unions, everybody. That is my main objective, just everybody.

Paula: Did you ask her how much money she made last year? This is sad.

EH: You can do it since you're her best friend.

Friend: You know what?

TB: She knows EVERYTHING-- even about me.

Paula: 23 plus years as a full-time state employee, PLUS, she had 3 years' temp service before she got hired on full-time-- she grossed \$23,000 last year and they raised her insurance. Now that is SAD. A 23 year loyal-- 23 years of loyal employee... not only that-- what they've done to the PEIA? This raise is just a slap in the face is what it is. They don't care about us. All they care about is their private personal agendas and pushing it through behind closed doors. We had Republicans that were siding with us-- they recessed, took 'em in the back room, and when they came out, they voted with their party. I mean it's sad. It's sad. And what they've done with the right to work and repealing prevailing wage? You know? I went out on a job last week, and see, I've been working pipeline, and they gave me a raise on the pipeline. I went out on a job, on a road job last week, and I took a dollar-fifty cut and the company didn't have to pay in my annuity, you know why? Because of no prevailing wage. And that's ridiculous! It's sad. It's sad.

EH: And what county are you from?

Paula: Jackson County, baby.

EH: What's your name?

Paula: Mitch Carmichael is from Jackson County, and we don't even vote for him. You know? My name's

Paula Prunty, and I'm in the Laborers Union Local 1085.

Beverly Hartley, President of AFT Local in Jackson County

BH: I'm Beverly Hartley, Jackson County, I'm president of the AFT Local in Jackson County.

EH: And could you tell me why you're here today?

BH: You know, it's hard to believe for a lot of people, but the truth is, this is not about the money and the PEIA for the teachers we already have, this is more about taking care of the children in the future. I want my grandchildren and their children to be taught by certified teachers and the way it is now, there's no reason for teachers to stay in West Virginia, because they can just cross the border and make so much more. And therefore, we're dumming down our system of education. And how's West Virginia going to survive that? They say that they need to invest in the future by breaking all these deals with these coal--natural resources people--the gas companies, the oil companies, all of that. They say that that's how they're going to build West Virginia's futures. They can't be more wrong. They can't be more wrong because where are the engineers going to come from for those companies? 45% of all of the math teachers grade 7-11 are NOT certified in math. I mean there's a statistic for you. And still West Virginia invested 2 million dollars last year in a golf tournament at the Greenbrier? I'm sorry--that is NOT appropriate. That is not helping our state. We invest all of this money in all of these prime interests of our legislators because basically my feeling is that they really do not care about West Virginians. I don't believe they care about West Virginians at all. I think they care about big business and the money they can line their pockets with.