

Teachers' Union Held Accountable for Allentown 'Ghost Teachers' | RELEASE

The Fairness Center

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After Years of Litigation, Pennsylvania State Education Association Finally Drops Effort to Provide Public Pensions to Full-Time Union Officials

March 4, 2020, Harrisburg, Pa.—A lawsuit filed by Allentown taxpayers has forced the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) to foot the bill for salary, benefits, and pension costs associated with the controversial practice of ghost teaching in Allentown School District. For years, teachers left the classroom to work full time for the local teachers' union but remained on school district payroll, receiving all incidences of public employment at taxpayers' expense.

But in 2016, with the help of the Fairness Center, local taxpayers Steven Ramos and Scott Armstrong and teacher James Williams filed a lawsuit, [*Ramos v. Allentown Education Association*](#), which [forced the union](#) to pay for future salary, benefits, and pension costs for ghost teachers. The lawsuit also prompted Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) to [revoke previous years of public pension credits](#) illegally awarded to two former ghost teachers, a move the PSEA opposed.

After years of continued litigation, the PSEA finally dropped its efforts to secure publicly funded pensions for Allentown ghost teachers and agreed to purchase annuities to cover their retirement costs.

"We shouldn't be paying teachers not to teach," commented Scott Armstrong, who is also a former Allentown School Board member. "I'm pleased that this lawsuit succeeded in ending ghost teaching as we know it in Allentown and in protecting the public pension system. School district resources should be used for one thing: educating kids. They should not be used as handouts to private organizations like unions."

"This was a game changing case that achieved our clients' goals," commented David Osborne, President and General Counsel for the Fairness Center. "Not only did our clients end ghost teaching in Allentown—they prompted many other school districts and PSERS to review and reform this practice, also known as 'release time,' which exists elsewhere in the public sector in Pennsylvania and across the country."

As a result of this lawsuit, PSERS and the PSEA have also ended the practice of ghost teaching in Erie and Lancaster school districts, among others. The issue is being raised nationally in states like New Jersey, where the state Supreme Court has taken up a case involving ghost teaching.

Documents

- [Case Website](#)
- [Complaint](#)

- [Plaintiffs' praecipe to discontinue action](#)
- [Backgrounder](#)

David Osborne is available for comment. Contact Conner Drigotas at 717.409.6964 or cddrigotas@fairnesscenter.org to schedule an interview.

The Fairness Center is a nonprofit, public interest law firm offering free legal services to those hurt by public-sector union officials. For more information visit www.FairnessCenter.org.