

Madame Chairwoman, members of the Committee... for the record my name is Lynn Warne, President of the Nevada State Education Association and I am here today to represent the 28,000 Nevada educators who are members of my organization. I'd like to thank you for some of the comments made this morning. Some of them were spot on. We understand the reality of the fiscal crisis facing the state. I want to be clear from the outset ... there are those who we have heard say that cuts for education are a foregone conclusion. That is an unacceptable argument to the educators of Nevada. The K-12 education budget has absorbed hundreds of millions of dollars in cuts already and I come here today to tell you loudly and clearly ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

I come here today to remind you of your responsibility and obligation to the schoolchildren, parents, and educators to provide the funding necessary for a proper education. Our kids, parents, and teachers have been told for years that we have to learn to do more with less, tighten our belts, make sacrifices and that maybe in the future things will get better. Well, things haven't improved and now you are asking an already strained system to absorb even more devastation. But this time will be different. This time the system has been strained for so long that the results of further cuts could be catastrophic and fatal to our schools.

For the past couple of years it has been fashionable among politicians to demand that "we can do better" and we need "parental involvement" and

“teacher accountability”. Nice campaign slogans, but if you really care about our kids and their education then how can you sit back and watch more kids jammed into fewer classes with less teachers and programs like art, music, and sports eliminated from their curriculum and still suggest to your constituents that you are doing the best you can?

And I must tell you that we all are tired of the hand-wringing and the seemingly rehearsed response “there is no appetite for taxes”. Well, there is even less of an appetite for schools with overcrowded classrooms, a state that ranks at the bottom of per-pupil expenditures, kids who can’t learn and teachers who can’t teach. And how can you perpetuate that canard when there are large corporations and industries that pay little or no taxes in our state?

Courage and leadership. Two very important words. How many times have we seen those words on political fliers and advertisements? But those two words represent exactly what we expect of you and what our state needs during this crisis.

So, it has come to this. You have been entrusted by your constituents to ensure that our schools have the funding they need to educate their kids. The time for posturing, finger pointing, and excuses is past. The choices seem clear and stark. You can lay off teachers, shorten the school year, or raise revenue.

Courage and Leadership...it's what our kids need!