



## **For Professionals and the Public, Professional Integrity Matters**

Do you want your children to learn something at school? Do you want to survive a hospital stay? Fly safely? Breathe the air and drink the water? If you answer yes, you value the ability of professionals to do their jobs right.

The **Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE)** salutes the 18 other national and global organizations that, in the interests of the public, have joined together to defend professional integrity against external pressures. DPE President Paul E. Almeida declared:

**“Professionals for the Public Interest: Associations and Unions Defending Professional Integrity** marks an unprecedented and potentially historic alignment of professional associations and unions. Its goal is nothing less than allowing professionals to do their work on the basis of expertise, experience, and high standards, with transparency and trust. Achieving that goal could mean a better quality of life for all of us.”

Unions representing professionals champion professional integrity in the public interest against external pressures in many contexts. Here are a few examples:

- In education, the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO calls itself “A Union of Professionals.” It has put education standards on the national agenda. At the state and local levels, it works for the conditions and resources that allow teachers and school employees, health workers, higher education faculty, public employees and others to do their jobs effectively.
- In health care, your chances of surviving a hospital stay for a heart attack are higher in a hospital with Registered Nurses in a union than in one whose RNs lack representation.<sup>1</sup> The unions representing health workers provide these workers a collective means to defend their professional integrity, seek adequate staffing, and advocate for the people for whom these workers care.
- In aerospace engineering, unions negotiate for continuing professional development, product quality, and public safety. The Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), Local 2001 of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, represents – among other employees at several employers – almost 20,000 professionals at Boeing. SPEEA engineers at Boeing undertook in 2000 the largest and longest strike by

professionals in the United States. Many carried picket signs that said: “SPEEA on Strike *for* Boeing.” They saw themselves as defending the professional integrity that would guarantee the company’s future.<sup>2</sup>

- At the intersection of science and government policy, unions at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – local unions affiliated with the American Federation of Government Employees, the International Association of Machinists, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, and others – have defended scientific integrity against political pressures for decades. Collectively they seek the latitude for federal scientists to gather and report scientific data accurately and transparently, so policy-makers and the public have honest information with which to make crucial decisions.

Polling across many professions and many years shows a consistent pattern: For professionals, the ability to do the job right is a priority as important as, or more important than, compensation and benefits. Professionals choose what they want to do, invest in extensive education and training, and value the latitude to meet professional standards. External financial and political pressures that endanger the ability of professionals to do their work also endanger the public they serve.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) is a coalition of 24 national unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO which represent over four million highly skilled professional and technical employees. DPE unions include professionals in over three hundred separate and distinct occupations in many sectors including health care and education; science, engineering and technology; journalism, entertainment and the arts; public administration and law enforcement. DPE is the largest association of professional and technical workers in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Ash, M. and Jean Ann Seago (20 December 2001). Do Unionized Registered Nurses Reduce AMI Mortality? Political Economy Research Institute Working Paper Series, Number 28. University of Massachusetts: Amherst.

<sup>2</sup> Kusnet, David, *Love the Work, Hate the Job: Why America’s Best Workers Are More Unhappy Than Ever* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008).