

The Fairness Center

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Pa. Taxpayers, Teacher File Brief Seeking to End Ghost Teaching in New Jersey

*Pa. residents hope neighboring state's court will help
banish controversial practice in both states*

April 16, 2020, Harrisburg, Pa.—After ending the practice of ghost teaching in Allentown, three Pennsylvania residents have filed an Amicus Curiae (friend of the court) brief in a New Jersey Supreme Court case seeking to end ghost teaching in the Garden State.

Ghost teaching is a controversial practice whereby teachers leave the classroom, sometimes for years, to work full time for the union while continuing to collect a teacher's salary, benefits, and pension credit on the taxpayers' dime. The arrangement, often contained in collective bargaining agreements between teachers' unions and school districts, is also known as "release time" and exists in other areas of the public sector.

The signers of the Amicus brief, Steven Ramos, Scott Armstrong, and James Williams, [previously sued](#) the Allentown Education Association (AEA), Allentown School District, and Public School Employees Retirement System, challenging their practice of using taxpayer dollars to fund the salary, benefits, and pension credit for the teachers' union presidents. The Fairness Center, a nonprofit, public-interest law firm representing those hurt by public-sector union officials, provided Ramos, Armstrong, and Williams with free legal representation.

After years of litigation, the AEA agreed to reimburse the school district for all future costs associated with teachers working full time for the union. Union officials also recently dropped efforts to secure publicly funded pensions for Allentown ghost teachers and agreed to purchase annuities to cover their retirement costs.

Because of this lawsuit and a similar case in Reading School District, Erie and Lancaster school districts, among others, also reformed their ghost teaching practices.

"Our success in ending ghost teaching in Allentown is saving vital resources for students, but this is a national issue," commented Armstrong, a former Allentown School Board member. "New Jersey should take a lesson from the Keystone State and ensure school district resources educate kids, rather than pay the salaries of union executives posing as teachers. Public resources should not be used as handouts to private organizations like unions."

The New Jersey lawsuit, [Rozenblit v. Lyles](#), brought to light that New Jersey taxpayers are paying the salaries of two full-time ghost teachers. The case was filed by the nonprofit Goldwater Institute.

"Our clients litigated for over four years to eradicate taxpayer-funded 'release time' for full-time union officials in just *one* of Pennsylvania's *five hundred* school districts," explained David Osborne, President & General Counsel of the Fairness Center. "But sustained litigation against the teachers' union required considerable time, energy, and judicial resources. Our clients believe that a ruling from the New Jersey Supreme Court would go a long way toward making any future litigation over this practice more efficient or, better yet, unnecessary."

Documents

- [Rozenblit v. Lyles Amicus Filing](#)
- [Rozenblit v. Lyles Case Website](#)
- [Ramos v. AEA Complaint](#)
- [Ramos v. AEA Backgrounder](#)
- [Ramos v. AEA Case Website](#)

Fairness Center attorneys are available for comment. Contact Conner Drigotas at 207.205.9133 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.