

Good Afternoon TOTEM Members,

The TOTEM Board met on Thursday, April 18, to consider the recommendations of the membership from the March 21 Membership Meeting. For clarification, motions made in membership meetings are considered recommendations only. Be assured, the TOTEM Board took these recommendations seriously and we wanted to reach out and let you know what was decided.

*The first recommendation to the Board was to form an emergency committee of 9 members, not to include any TOTEM, APEA/AFT, or EPIC Board Members, to bring forward its review in person to the TOTEM Board in a Special Membership meeting to discuss the need for a revision of the Affiliation Agreement TOTEM has with APEA/AFT.*

We were somewhat unclear as to the specific duties and purpose of the committee, so the following information was discussed:

- 1) **A committee formed in this way would violate the TOTEM Bylaws themselves.** Our Bylaws state in Article XIII, Section 1g that the President: *“Shall be an ex-officio member of all committees with the exception of the Nominations/Elections Committee.”*
- 2) **The Affiliation Agreement in question is a historical document.** It was drawn up to outline the process and procedures of how TOTEM and APEA would become affiliated. It was in force for 48 months after TOTEM and APEA signed the document in 2004. During that time, TOTEM was allowed to reverse their decision to affiliate if the majority of members voted to do so. The agreement is no longer in effect because TOTEM is now fully affiliated with APEA. TOTEM is held to the APEA and the AFT Constitution which outlines the expectations of affiliation with APEA/AFT.
- 3) **What does it look like to disaffiliate with APEA/AFT?** This is not as simple as just walking away from APEA/AFT: for TOTEM to remove themselves from APEA/AFT, they would need to dissolve the union entirely. The process is very difficult and includes forfeiture of funds, as well as freeze-out from other unions. These same protections from raids which make it problematic to disaffiliate are also one of the reasons that TOTEM initially affiliated with APEA/AFT back in 2004 and why we still believe affiliation is vital. Once the current contract has expired, the District is no longer required to negotiate a new contract if there is no union.
- 4) **What does it look like to reform TOTEM after dissolving?** There are laws that govern how a union is formed. Initially, 75-80% (at least) of the prospective members must sign pledge cards that say they would be willing to join a union and pay dues. Once those pledge cards are signed, they need to apply to the ASD School Board to see if they will recognize TOTEM as a union. Then membership forms would need to be turned in for at least 50% plus one of the employees. Contract negotiations would begin, but those who sign up for membership will not have to pay dues until a tentative agreement has been ratified by the members. The Board considered that reforming TOTEM would have to be done without money and by the members alone – there would be no help from outside sources or even a TOTEM Board – this would be a monumental task.

5) **Is there a way to change how much dues TOTEM Members pay to APEA?** Several Board members believed this was part of what the forming of a committee was meant to accomplish, so there was discussion about what this would look like:

- APEA/AFT currently contributes several thousand dollars of TOTEM's dues money directly back to TOTEM expenses. The Spring Conference, the TOTEM AA's salary and benefits, as well as the office space and supplies, are all evidence of money which is singularly and directly applied to TOTEM Members.
- This means that, although TOTEM Members make up about 13% of APEA/AFT's membership, TOTEM dues are only covering about 4.5% of APEA/AFT's expenses.
- There is no precedence for requesting the APEA/AFT Board revise a local's dues, which means the TOTEM Board could potentially do so. However, the APEA/AFT Board is currently examining dues' structure and payments within all of APEA. This means that changes will be made in the upcoming months for all APEA/AFT Members. Please note: Any dues changes must be approved (voted on) by all APEA/AFT Members before they go into effect.

For these reasons, the TOTEM Board does not believe that an emergency committee should be formed at this time. However, there is no reason not to revisit this request once the APEA/AFT Board has made some decisions regarding dues changes. We expect this to be sometime after October of this year.

*The second recommendation by TOTEM Members was to adjourn the membership meeting at a later date.* The TOTEM Board will be meeting for its annual planning session in August and will be scheduling further membership meetings at this time. We will be sure to let the members know when those dates are scheduled.

We have decided to open a forum in the TOTEM app, a confidential membership space, to allow members to continue to ask questions about the information contained here. We would like to keep an open dialogue with the membership about TOTEM's affiliation with APEA/AFT and why we believe that we are stronger together.

In Solidarity,

Your TOTEM Board of Directors