Workers union flunks Roemer

By JOHN LaPLANTE 10/17/1990

The state's largest school employee union gives Gov. Buddy Roemer failing grades and will begin searching for "a real education governor" to elect next year, the head of the group said Sunday.

The Louisiana Association of Educators also announced a public relations campaign to replace Roemer's teacher evaluation program with a less onerous way to assess teacher competence.

But LAE President Linda B. Day acknowledged that, even if lawmakers go along with the union's still unwritten plan next spring, Roemer could just veto it and keep his evaluation program in place for another year.

So the union already is setting its sights on next fall's governor's race, Day said at a news conference marking the start of the group's annual convention in Baton Rouge.

"The teachers and students of Louisiana are searching for a real education governor — a governor who truly puts children first, not only in words, but in deeds as well," said Day, an assistant principal at a Shreveport middle school.

LAE had little influence on the last governor's race, endorsing U.S. Rep. Billy Tauzin, D-Thibodaux, who placed fourth and apparently did not receive the bulk of votes from teachers, Day said.

However, "I would hope that teachers have learned their lesson" and will unite behind a single candidate next year, Day said.

Day would not rule out endorsing Roemer, but, when pressed to give him a letter grade for his performance in office, she said, "I'll give him an F."

Roemer gave teachers and principals the largest pay raise package in state history — about $240 million, or an average 30 percent increase in their state base pay, when fully implemented next fall.

LAE is upset that Roemer has refused state-paid raises for other school employees such as bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, who number about 3,000 of the union's roughly 23,000 members.

LAE also lacks any access to the governor, who has not responded to requests for meetings with LAE, Day said.

But the group is most upset about Roemer's teacher evaluation program, which Day said is "based more on removing than improving."

Under the plan, begun this fall, a fifth of the state's classroom teachers will be observed each year by trained educators. Teachers receiving unsatisfactory marks are supposed to be offered remedial help. They have up to two years to improve their skills or their teaching certificates could be removed.

Besides several "shortcomings," the plan is unconstitutional because it links teacher certification to evaluation, Day said. LAE has filed a lawsuit seeking to strike down that part of the law.

In addition, the union "will submit its own teacher evaluation plan to the 1991 legislative session. It will be research-based and education-driven. It will not be re-election driven," Day said.

Before the spring session, LAE will sponsor a series of public forums to "tell the real story" about what exactly LaTEP is and what LaTEP is not," she said. LaTEP is the acronym for Roemer's program.

Asked to outline LAE's alternative, Day said it is has not yet been developed. She said only that "our plan will be for improving, not removing."

LAE also will get involved in races for seats in the Legislature and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, also up for grabs next fall.

The group's political action committee "is raising funds for an election war chest," Day said. "We will work to ensure that those who hold high political office are true friends of education."

The LAE convention continues through Tuesday. Roemer is scheduled to address delegates Tuesday morning.

CONTINUED FROM 1B

Last fall, the union began a public relations campaign to "convince the public that Roemer's teacher evaluation program is a disaster." Tze, a 10th-grade teacher at Bossier Parish High School, which is one of the schools with the highest percentage of teachers receiving failing grades, said the plan is "like a blood test: how many teachers are weak so that we can pull them out?"

Tze, a Democrat, thinks the plan is "a ploy to get rid of the bad teachers," and believes it will fail because it does not target the 5 percent of teachers who are actually bad.

"They made the program so bad that not even the bad teachers will pass. Teachers are so upset they will not even respond to the evaluation plan," she said.

The Louisiana Association of Educators also is calling for a cap on class size and for a "real education governor." But LAE President Linda B. Day said the group is "not sitting around waiting for the governor to make the change.He has to come to us."

The state's largest school employee union gives Gov. Buddy Roemer failing grades and will begin searching for "a real education governor" to elect next year, the head of the group said Sunday.

The Louisiana Association of Educators also announced a public relations campaign to replace Roemer's teacher evaluation program with a less onerous way to assess teacher competence.

But LAE President Linda B. Day acknowledged that, even if lawmakers go along with the union's still unwritten plan next spring, Roemer could just veto it and keep his evaluation program in place for another year.

So the union already is setting its sights on next fall's governor's race, Day said at a news conference marking the start of the group's annual convention in Baton Rouge.

"The teachers and students of Louisiana are searching for a real education governor — a governor who truly puts children first, not only in words, but in deeds as well," said Day, an assistant principal at a Shreveport middle school.

LAE had little influence on the last governor's race, endorsing U.S. Rep. Billy Tauzin, D-Thibodaux, who placed fourth and apparently did not receive the bulk of votes from teachers, Day said.

However, "I would hope that teachers have learned their lesson" and will unite behind a single candidate next year, Day said.

Day would not rule out endorsing Roemer, but, when pressed to give him a letter grade for his performance in office, she said, "I'll give him an F."

Roemer gave teachers and principals the largest pay raise package in state history — about $240 million, or an average 30 percent increase in their state base pay, when fully implemented next fall.

LAE is upset that Roemer has refused state-paid raises for other school employees such as bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers, who number about 3,000 of the union's roughly 23,000 members.

LAE also lacks any access to the governor, who has not responded to requests for meetings with LAE, Day said.

But the group is most upset about Roemer's teacher evaluation program, which Day said is "based more on removing than improving."

Under the plan, begun this fall, a fifth of the state's classroom teachers will be observed each year by trained educators. Teachers receiving unsatisfactory marks are supposed to be offered remedial help. They have up to two years to improve their skills or their teaching certificates could be removed.

Besides several "shortcomings," the plan is unconstitutional because it links teacher certification to evaluation, Day said. LAE has filed a lawsuit seeking to strike down that part of the law.

In addition, the union "will submit its own teacher evaluation plan to the 1991 legislative session. It will be research-based and education-driven. It will not be re-election driven," Day said.

Before the spring session, LAE will sponsor a series of public forums to "tell the real story" about what exactly LaTEP is and what LaTEP is not," she said. LaTEP is the acronym for Roemer's program.

Asked to outline LAE's alternative, Day said it is has not yet been developed. She said only that "our plan will be for improving, not removing."

LAE also will get involved in races for seats in the Legislature and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, also up for grabs next fall.

The group's political action committee "is raising funds for an election war chest," Day said. "We will work to ensure that those who hold high political office are true friends of education."

The LAE convention continues through Tuesday. Roemer is scheduled to address delegates Tuesday morning.

CONTINUED FROM 1B

each year by trained educators. Teachers receiving unsatisfactory marks are supposed to be offered remedial help. They have up to two years to improve their skills or their teaching certificates could be removed.

Besides several "shortcomings," the plan is unconstitutional because it links teacher certification to evaluation, Day said. LAE has filed a lawsuit seeking to strike down that part of the law.

In addition, the union "will submit its own teacher evaluation plan to the 1991 legislative session. It will be research-based and education-driven. It will not be re-election driven," Day said.

Before the spring session, LAE will sponsor a series of public forums to "tell the real story" about what exactly LaTEP is and what LaTEP is not," she said. LaTEP is the acronym for Roemer's program.

Asked to outline LAE's alternative, Day said it is has not yet been developed. She said only that "our plan will be for improving, not removing."

LAE also will get involved in races for seats in the Legislature and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, also up for grabs next fall.

The group's political action committee "is raising funds for an election war chest," Day said. "We will work to ensure that those who hold high political office are true friends of education."

The LAE convention continues through Tuesday. Roemer is scheduled to address delegates Tuesday morning.