

To the Editor:

On Saturday, March 5, 2011, I attended a meeting of the Wilson County Conservatives because they were discussing issues affecting me as a teacher. Walter Jewell of the Professional Educators of Tennessee was speaking in order to “educate” the group about the bills introduced in Congress affecting education. I wanted to hear his take on the matter and to make sure that he was telling the group accurate information.

What I learned in this meeting is that as an education major in college, I was “radicalized,” and, as a member of a competing organization, I am purposefully “dumbing down” my students in an effort to promote a Democratic agenda.

I was extremely offended, and I want to defend myself and hopefully educate others in the process of doing so. I never took any political classes in college as an education major. I was not told when I signed my teaching contract some 13 years ago that I had to vote a certain way or belong to a particular political group. In fact, when I get up and go to work every day, politics are the furthest thing from my mind. My concern is for my students. I want them to be educated enough to make a difference in this world. I don’t care who they or their parents vote for, I just want them to be educated enough to make up their own mind and to respectfully stand up for themselves and for what is right, which is what I was trying to do by attending this meeting.

What I discovered, sadly, is that some people are more concerned with being right than with doing right. When I tried to ask a question of the speaker, Mary Stimek, president of the Republican Women of Wilson County, laughed aloud humiliating me in front of the group. All I wanted was to make sure people understand that this isn’t a simple issue.

There is more to all of this than meets the eye. These issues affect teachers in the classroom who don’t go to school every day trying to promote a political agenda. But no one asked. Not one person asked me how these changes would affect me or my students. They took the word of a hired speaker who used to teach many years ago in a different era and county, which told me that no one cared. That, to me, is disheartening. To think that there are issues out there that will affect teachers, and ultimately students, and instead of asking them, they laugh at and try to humiliate them.

What I want others to know is that there are teachers out there just like me who pour their heart

and soul into their jobs and try to do what is right by our students every day. We love what we do and the students whom we teach. We're out there and you can ask us. We'll tell you why we need the ability to collectively bargain. We'll tell you why certain organizations were formed, and it isn't for the reasons you may be hearing. We are just as concerned about keeping good teachers in the classrooms as anyone else is. Instead of listening to someone with a political agenda, ask us. We'll help you understand. It's what we do.

Melissa Robinson

Mt. Juliet